UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)
1st meeting
held on
Tuesday, 17 September 1996
at 4 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Temporary Chairman: Mr. RAZALI
(President of the General Assembly)

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ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.4/51/SR.1
11 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-81141 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

1. Mr. MAHUGU (Kenya) nominated Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) for the office of Chairman.

2. In the absence of further nominations and in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure, the TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that he would take it, if he heard no objection, that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) Chairman.

3. Mr Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)
2nd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 1 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

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REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.4/51/SR.2
8 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

96-81252 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN said that some of the items on the Committee's agenda had been under consideration for a long time and deserved to be addressed in earnest so that the problems in question could be resolved as rapidly as possible. In the case of the item entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Croatia", he hoped that the parties concerned would be patient and endeavour to find a solution acceptable to all.

2. In order to achieve progress, all delegations, and first and foremost the parties directly concerned, must show a spirit of mutual understanding and must be cooperative and flexible so as to be able to progress in the right direction.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3. Mr. HOLOHAN (Ireland) nominated Ms. Carayanides (Australia) and Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) nominated Mrs. Leonce-Carryl (Saint Lucia) for the two offices of Vice-Chairman.

4. Ms. Carayanides (Australia) and Mrs. Leonce-Carryl (Saint Lucia) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.4/51/1; A/C.4/51/L.1)

5. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had before it a letter dated 20 September 1996 from the President of the General Assembly containing the list of agenda items allocated to it for consideration (A/C.4/51/1) and a note by the Chairman prepared in accordance with the related decisions and practices of the General Assembly (A/C.4/51/L.1). He drew attention to the recommendations concerning the organization and rationalization of the work and practices of the General Assembly contained in the report of the General Committee (A/51/250) and to the decisions taken by the General Assembly regarding the closing date of the session, the schedule of meetings, explanations of vote, rights of reply and points of order.

6. On the question of the length of statements during general debates, he suggested that the time limit should be set at 10 minutes, with the exception of statements made by spokesmen for groups of delegations, for which the time limit should be 15 minutes.

7. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) suggested that statements by petitioners should be subject to the same time limits.

8. Mr. KATTI (Algeria) said that the time limits should be applied only to Member States. Petitioners, who appeared only once during the session, should be allotted the time they needed to speak to the Committee.

9. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that States were limited to one statement on each item in the general debate; moreover, some petitioners had already made statements in the Special Committee on decolonization. They should be subject to the same time limits.

10. Mr. COHEN (Netherlands) said that not all members of the Committee were also members of the Special Committee on decolonization.

11. Mr. HOLOHAN (Ireland) said that the Committee was in no position to decide whether individual petitioners should be limited to a particular time; the matter could be decided only by the Bureau, on a case-by-case basis.

12. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in line with the practice in the Special Committee on decolonization, the time limit for statements by petitioners should be 15 minutes.

13. It was so decided.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that, with regard to records of meetings, the General Assembly had approved the recommendation of the General Committee to maintain the practice whereby the Fourth Committee received summary records but could obtain, on specific request, transcripts of the debates of some of its meetings or portions thereof. He drew members' attention to the recommendations contained in the report of the General Committee (A/51/250) regarding the conduct of the session, the submission of draft resolutions and the control and limitation of documentation. He had also circulated to members an aide-mémoire from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences concerning improved utilization of conference-servicing resources which also spelled out the costs for meetings and documentation. Members were urged to keep those figures in mind.

15. Turning to the timetable in document A/C.4/51/L.1, he said that, on the basis of the number of meetings required for the consideration of its agenda in previous years, the Committee had been allocated 28 meetings at the current session. He had circulated an informal report on the status of the Committee's documentation.

16. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) inquired when the verbatim records for the 1996 session of the Special Committee on decolonization would be available and whether the informal report on the status of documentation would be made available in all the official languages.

17. It seemed to his delegation that the practice of conducting a general debate on decolonization questions in the Fourth Committee followed by a debate on those same questions in the plenary Assembly constituted a duplication of work, and he would welcome some information from the Secretariat on the origins of that practice. It might be possible to save both time and resources if the decolonization items were considered only in the plenary Assembly.

18. Mr. ABDUR-RAZZAQUE (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Special Committee was currently receiving summary records, not verbatim records. The unavailability of the summary records was undoubtedly due to the downsizing of

the translation services, which were finding it difficult to keep pace with the volume of work. The reports listed would be available well before the items were scheduled for consideration, however.

19. The practice of conducting a debate on decolonization items in both the Fourth Committee and the plenary Assembly dated from some 15 years earlier and had originated as a commemoration of an anniversary of the Special Committee.

20. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the office of the Director of Conference Services had informed him that the production of documents depended on their date of submission. Since the workload was usually light during August and September, it was reasonable to expect the summary records of a session held in July to be available. If summary records could not be issued in a timely way, they were of use only as a historical record. He therefore proposed that the Fourth Committee should decide that the practice of preparing summary records for meetings of the Special Committee should be abolished.

21. He urged the Bureau to consider the validity of the practice of holding debates on decolonization items in both the Fourth Committee and the plenary Assembly.

22. Mr. KATTI (Algeria) said that, in accordance with past practice, the Bureau of the Committee should discuss the matter of the debate on decolonization items. The Special Committee on decolonization, as a sovereign body, should decide for itself whether it wished to continue receiving summary records of its meetings.

23. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that, while the Fourth Committee had the competence to decide on the matter of summary records for the Special Committee, he agreed with the representative of Algeria that the Special Committee should be asked to make a recommendation.

24. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should approve, in principle, the suggestions contained in document A/C.4/51/L.1.

25. It was so decided.

26. The CHAIRMAN noted that bodies and individuals having an interest in the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) (agenda item 49) would be heard in the Committee in conjunction with the consideration of the item in plenary meeting. The Committee would be informed if any requests were received on the item.

27. In connection with agenda item 83 he suggested that, as in previous years, the Committee should establish an open-ended working group chaired by the delegation of Austria to prepare a draft resolution on the item.

28. It was so decided.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that, by approving the suggested outline of work, the Committee had decided to hold a single general debate covering agenda items 19,

88, 89, 90 and 12 and 91, thereby enabling the members to speak on all those items or any one of them at meetings dealing with that cluster of items.

30. At previous sessions, the Fourth Committee, on the recommendation of the Special Committee on decolonization, had usually considered the chapter of the Special Committee's report relating to military activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories in conjunction with the item on foreign economic interests. He took it that the Committee wished to retain that procedure.

31. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/51/23 (Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, 2055-2057 and 2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VIII) and A/51/316 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (A/51/23 (Part III, chaps. V and VI))

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and A/51/212; A/AC.109/L.1853; E/1996/85)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (A/51/3, chap. V, sect. A)

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (A/51/373)

32. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee, introduced the chapters of the Special Committee's report covering its work during 1996 under agenda items 19, 88, 89 and 90 and contained in document A/51/23 (Parts II-VII).

33. The Special Committee's recommendations and proposals were contained in chapters IX to XII of document A/51/23 (Parts V to VIII). It was the responsibility of the administering Powers to create conditions under which the peoples of the Territories could exercise their right to self-determination. The administering Powers should also be requested to promote political education and economic and social development in the Territories, preserve their cultural identities and protect them from environmental degradation. United Nations specialized agencies and other bodies should be invited to dispatch visiting missions to the Territories to expedite progress in those areas and to perform

monitoring functions. It was regrettable that France, the United Kingdom and the United States, as administering Powers, had not participated in the Committee's work during the year. The chapters of the report of the Special Committee covering its work during 1996 concerning agenda items 89 and 90 appeared in document A/51/23 (Parts III and IV), chapters V to VII. Pursuant to paragraph 8 of General Assembly decision 50/412 of 6 December 1995, concerning military activities and arrangements by colonial Powers in Territories under their administration, the Special Committee's recommendation to the Assembly was contained in document A/51/23 (Part III), chapter VI.

34. Mr. SAMANA (Papua New Guinea), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee, reviewed the background and circumstances surrounding the preparation of the Special Committee's recommendations. The Committee had paid particular attention to the special needs of the Territories, notably with respect to their economic and social development. To that end, the cooperation of the administering Powers was highly desirable, and the specialized agencies of the United Nations were urged to extend all possible assistance. While much progress had been made, innovative and realistic solutions would be required if the world was to be free of colonialism by the year 2000.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

35. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that eight communications had been received containing requests for hearings on matters relating to Guam, New Caledonia and Western Sahara. He suggested that in accordance with the usual practice, they should be circulated as Committee documents and considered at the next meeting.

36. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) asked what justification there was for the hearing of petitions on Western Sahara.

37. Mr. ABDUR-RAZZAQUE (Secretary of the Committee) stated that as yet only the names of four petitioners were known; full information would be forthcoming when the requests were circulated as Committee documents. They were expected to be available by 11 October.

38. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the Committee's regular practice had always been to circulate requests for hearings in advance. Proper procedure would thus appear to require that no petitioners would be heard at the next meeting of the Committee, scheduled as it was for 7 October.

39. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the documents would be available shortly; meanwhile, the Committee had already decided to consider requests for hearing at its next meeting and, subject to approval, to hear the petitioners themselves. He suggested that the Committee should follow that procedure.

40. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)
3rd meeting
held on
Monday, 7 October 1996
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

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ELECTION OF OFFICERS (continued)

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AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued)*

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.4/51/SR.3
31 December 1996
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

96-81282 (E)

CONTENTS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would proceed to elect a Rapporteur.

2. Mr. BREIER (Venezuela) nominated Mr. Doudech (Tunisia) for the office of Rapporteur.

3. Mr. Doudech (Tunisia) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

4. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to eight communications containing requests for hearings: three relating to Guam (A/C.4/51/3 and Add.1 and 2), one relating to New Caledonia (A/C.4/51/4) and four relating to Western Sahara (A/C.4/51/5 and Add. 1, 2 and 3). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

5. It was so decided.

6. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that he had received another six communications containing requests for hearings on New Caledonia and Western Sahara under agenda item 19. The communications would be circulated as Committee documents.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part II, chap. III and IV, Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X, and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2049 and Corr.1 and 2, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1 and 2055-2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VIII) and A/51/316 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (continued) (A/51/23 (Part III, chap. V and VI))

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and A/51/212; A/AC.109/L.1853; E/1996/85)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/51/3, chap. V, sect. A)

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/51/373)

7. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that, since the Committee had decided to begin hearing petitioners under the various agenda items, including the item on the so-called Western Sahara, it was essential to raise the question of documentation. The Secretary-General's report (A/51/428), which had been circulated among delegations on 4 October 1996, dealt with three proposals. In its effort to summarize information on the subject, the Secretariat had probably confused those three proposals. In paragraph 3 of the report, the proposal of 8 September 1995, contained in the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council (S/1995/779) had been confused with the proposal contained in a letter dated 27 October 1995 to the President of the Security Council (S/1995/924). Paragraph 3 also referred to a third proposal, contained in the Secretary-General's report of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986). In order to avoid confusion, the Secretariat should provide clarifications or issue a corrigendum before the Committee began considering the item, since reference would be made to those proposals in the course of the discussion. His delegation had no objection to the proposal of 8 September 1995; on the contrary, it supported it, which had been reflected in the preamble of a Security Council resolution.

8. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would provide clarifications at a later time.

9. Mr. KILROY GENIA (Papua New Guinea) said that the task that the Committee had set for itself was embodied in the name of the current International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The successful completion of that task would depend on how effectively the many issues on the agenda would be addressed. The Committee had a special role to play in ensuring that the United Nations fulfilled its commitments to the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

10. In spite of widespread misgivings, the opportunities for transparency and accountability that the Committee provided had made decolonization processes more responsive to local circumstances, and their outcomes more flexible. The aspirations of the peoples of the South Pacific for self-determination had been realized in different ways: from commonwealth status and various forms of free association to full sovereignty.

11. In spite of the small size of most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Committee still had an important task to perform. Cutting back on its functions or resources would only impair its ability to promote the attainment of important goals, without achieving any worthwhile, lasting reform. For small island Territories, the Committee was even more important, since those Territories were situated far away from major world centres and trade routes and were also extremely vulnerable to human threats and natural disasters.

12. The United Nations responsibility towards the people of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would not conclude with decolonization. As the Barbados Declaration had recognized, the very survival of small island States demanded that the international community should build new and equitable partnerships with such States. The Special Committee might usefully set aside

time and resources over the next few years in order to identify and promote partnerships of the kind required to sustain and enhance the situation of small island States after the immediate challenge of decolonization had been met. In the South Pacific that would mean giving priority to measures to limit the emission of gases that threatened the survival of atoll States as a result of global warming. It might also mean that the South Pacific Forum would be encouraged to facilitate cooperation directed towards maintaining the security of communities faced with contingencies which they could not manage for themselves. A wider exchange of ideas - between Committee members, island people and experts from various regions - could make a very helpful contribution to the Committee's deliberations.

13. The situation of New Caledonia was a matter of particular concern to Papua New Guinea, the members of the Melanesian spearhead group and the South Pacific Forum. That concern arose from their commitment to decolonization and the rights of the indigenous Kanaks, including the preservation and promotion of their social and cultural values, which had been reflected in the South Pacific Forum vision statement and the "Melanesia beyond 2000" strategy which declared that the four Member States and the Front de libération nationale Kanake socialiste (FLNKS) were determined to support the orderly decolonization of New Caledonia with special safeguards for the indigenous Kanaks. An ongoing mechanism to monitor the situation in New Caledonia had been set up following a decision of the South Pacific Forum in 1991.

14. Following the negotiations of an agreement between the principal political actors - the French Government, FLNKS and the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR) - embodied in the Matignon Accords in 1988, the system of Government had been restructured to give the Kanaks a greater say in local affairs. Efforts had also been made to rebalance the economy to areas where most of the population were Kanaks. None of the changes introduced since 1988 had completely redressed injustices or inequalities in access to paid employment, opportunities for self-advancement or participation in state administrative bodies. There were fears that, at the referendum due to be held in 1998, New Caledonia residents would be allowed only two choices: continued French rule or complete abandonment, including the possible threat of an end to French aid. It would certainly help if the French Government were to state clearly that it intended to act in the same way as other former colonial Powers by maintaining an aid relationship if independence proved to be the preferred outcome of the referendum. Meanwhile, the South Pacific Forum continued to support implementation of the Matignon Accords. Papua New Guinea remained firmly committed to self-determination for New Caledonia with special safeguards for the indigenous Kanaks. The Government of Papua New Guinea supported the recommendations that the regional seminar held in Port Moresby had made to the Special Committee on decolonization, namely that a fact-finding mission should be sent to New Caledonia as soon as possible; that the claims for self-determination for New Caledonia should be supported at relevant forums of the United Nations; that political education should be encouraged to assist participants in New Caledonia's political process, both in self-determination referendums and in determining rights and obligations; and that steps should be taken to ensure fair preparation and conduct of a self-determination referendum.

15. Despite the unsatisfactory rate at which previous offers of aid had been taken up, his Government would continue to provide such assistance for Kanak development as accorded with its Pacific plan, and urged the authorities in New Caledonia to recognize the qualifications that Kanak students and trainees had earned at institutions in Papua New Guinea and other countries in the region.

16. Papua New Guinea was strongly committed to decolonization on the basis of self-determination and was actively engaged in mutually beneficial forms of cooperation with all of the colonial powers whose Territories in the South Pacific appeared on the Special Committee's agenda. Like other countries in the region, Papua New Guinea was actively seeking ways to broaden, deepen and diversify such co-operation, both on a bilateral basis and through multilateral arrangements. With the cessation of nuclear testing in the region and accession to the South Pacific Nuclear-free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga), France had been admitted as a dialogue partner. The most serious issue facing France in the South Pacific concerned the aftermath of the nuclear testing programme. France needed to monitor the effects of the programme on French Polynesia, to make its findings public, and to act promptly to repair any damage and limit any further adverse effects. The right to self-determination of colonial Territories and peoples was another issue that would have to be addressed. His Government wanted to encourage France to continue playing an active and positive role in the region, although Papua New Guinea was not alone in wondering on what basis Pacific islands, separated by thousands of kilometres from metropolitan France, could be regarded as part of that country.

17. His Government supported the decolonization process of Guam which was currently under United States administration. It was important to ensure that the interests of the indigenous Chamorro people were taken into account.

18. The right to self-determination was a right to participate in a certain kind of process, whatever the outcome of that process might be. The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea had therefore chosen his words quite deliberately when he asked why French Polynesia as well as Wallis and Futuna were not on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

19. The positive effects of the Special Committee's work could be seen in the varying forms of self-determination in the South Pacific, and in the generally good relations that prevailed between formerly colonized and formerly colonizing nations. They could also be seen in the mutually productive ways in which New Zealand and the people of Tokelau had cooperated with and through the United Nations in preparing for a future based on respect for the principles and practices set out in the Charter. Papua New Guinea therefore welcomed the continuing work of the Special Committee on decolonization, both in principle and as it affected the South Pacific.

20. Mr. RIDER (New Zealand) said that he wished to express his thanks to the United Nations and the Special Committee for the assistance they were providing to New Zealand and Tokelau by creating conditions for the people of the Territory to determine its future. The current year had been a significant one in Tokelau's search for self-determination. On 1 August 1996, the Tokelau Amendment Act, passed by the New Zealand Parliament, had entered into force. The Act conferred on Tokelau the power to make and enact legislation. Tokelau's

progress towards self-government status was on track. Concerned that future neglect could be the price to pay for greater self-reliance, Tokelau was seeking assurances from the international community through the Special Committee and the United Nations that States Members of the United Nations would not remain indifferent to the fate of a small population situated on three atolls in the Pacific Ocean. In particular, Tokelau needed an infrastructure, which was critical to the full development of self-government. It was already clear that any free-association formula must acknowledge that local resources could not adequately cover the material side of self-determination. This was one of the key lessons that New Zealand had drawn from its experience with Tokelau. Decolonization could be successfully achieved only through the participation in that process of the inhabitants of the Territory, the administering Power and the United Nations. In the case of Tokelau, considerable progress had been made as a result of successful interaction not just between Tokelau and New Zealand but between Tokelau, New Zealand and the United Nations.

21. Although the Acting Chairman of the Special Committee had called for "a new and innovative as well as pragmatic approach", many small Territories experienced little discomfort with the status quo. His delegation believed that the United Nations had to be realistic, since it was unlikely that the last vestiges of colonialism would be eradicated by the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The United Nations could and should re-evaluate its strategy and acknowledge that its own image in some of the small Territories was not as positive as it should be. Sometimes the population of those isolated islands saw the United Nations as an enormous and insensitive bureaucracy driven by agendas that had made sense in the past to large States but in today's world did not address the needs of very small Territories. The time had come for a new approach. His delegation proposed the following basis for interaction among all three parties: (i) the administering Powers should commit themselves to cooperating with the United Nations on the basis of a new, innovative and pragmatic approach; (ii) the United Nations, in cooperation with the administering Powers, should elaborate the concept of the new, innovative and pragmatic approach; (iii) it should be recognized that part of the process of finding suitable solutions involved the Organization's improvement of its image with the peoples of the Territories; (iv) it was necessary to convince some administering Powers that the United Nations was not seeking confrontation or to impose solutions; and (v) the United Nations machinery for discussing each of the Territories should be adjusted in order to reflect real needs. It was essential to ensure full compliance with the reporting requirements contained in the Charter of the United Nations; direct input, through the voice of petitioners, from the peoples of the Territories; the annual multilateral review of all material presented; consideration of the situation in the Territories directly in the Special Committee; and reflection in appropriate decisions of the General Assembly upon the advice of the Special Committee of specific avenues for United Nations input (such as visiting missions, electoral assistance or coordination of any kind).

22. Innovative solutions were unlikely to appear in a vacuum. Nor did defence of the status quo readily produce new thinking. There was a need for more informed debate. Such debate, which would have to be well prepared, should take place among all three interested parties. Comparative experience, including the experience of former Territories that had achieved self-determination, was also

relevant. Any discussion of questions relating to future political status should take place within a larger framework and should reflect each Territory's current situation and concerns. For example, there were contemporary concerns about threats to security that had been much less evident when the major work of decolonization was being undertaken. That situation posed certain difficulties for the Fourth Committee. There was a temptation to be diverted by side issues, such as the Special Committee's decision to hold its seminar in June 1996 in Port Moresby. The challenge was to find productive middle ground. While the Port Moresby seminar had not supplied answers to all questions, it had provided some very useful pointers.

23. The Special Committee's report and some of its resolutions seemed to reflect an equal willingness to shift the focus from theories of decolonization that had been appropriate in the past to contemporary problems faced by most very small Territories. In particular, the resolution on small Territories was a step in the right direction. The operative part of that resolution requested the administering Powers to ascertain the views of the peoples of the Territory in a democratic way and inform the Secretary-General of those views. There were, however, areas for improvement. The language that appeared in the Special Committee's resolutions on foreign economic interests and military activities remained archaic. That perhaps could be explained by a feeling of frustration at the continuance of colonialism and the absence of dialogue with administering Powers other than New Zealand. His delegation supported the work of the Special Committee and thanked it for its assistance and support for the people of Tokelau as it moved towards self-determination.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part II, chaps. III and IV, Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X, and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2049 and Corr.1 and 2, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, 2055-2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

Question of Gibraltar

24. With the Committee's consent and in accordance with established procedure, the Chairman proposed that the Committee should invite Mr. Caruana (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) to make a statement.

25. It was so decided

26. Mr. CARUANA (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) said that the rights of Gibraltarians derived naturally and undeniably from the fact that they were a cohesive people moulded into a unique and separate identity over 296 uninterrupted years of development following British occupation of Gibraltar in 1704. During all of that period, Gibraltar had been a colony of the United Kingdom and not a part of Spain, which had ceded Gibraltar to the British Crown in perpetuity under article 10 of the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713. Nevertheless, in spite of the friction between Gibraltar and Spain in connection with Spain's claim to sovereignty over Gibraltar, the new Government of Gibraltar was determined to do all that it could to overcome and reverse that destructive tendency.

27. It was important to concentrate on Gibraltar's fundamental position on decolonization and the doctrine of the United Nations. The Kingdom of Spain asserted that it was the doctrine of the United Nations that the decolonization of Gibraltar could only be achieved by the integration of Gibraltar into Spain, a view rejected by Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. The very sine qua non of all decolonization was the freely expressed will of the people. At the present time the exercise by the colonized people of Gibraltar of their right to self-determination was not related to the issue of Spain's territorial integrity. As had been stressed at the Conference on Decolonization held the previous June in Papua New Guinea, there was no alternative in the decolonization process to the principle of self-determination as enunciated by General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960, and other General Assembly resolutions. In the Namibia Case, the International Court of Justice had observed that international law in regard to Non-Self-Governing Territories as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations made the principle of self-determination applicable to all of them.

28. Gibraltar would prefer that its future status should be one that Spain could live with, so that good-neighbourly relations could prevail thereafter. But such a position in no way affected Gibraltar's inalienable right to self-determination. The Government of Gibraltar wished to establish better relations and to engage in cooperation with Spain. Those efforts were bearing fruit at local level, but the initiatives really needed to be complemented by an improvement in the political climate between Gibraltar and Madrid. Unfortunately, the behaviour of the central Government in Madrid had done little to facilitate such cooperation and had hampered Gibraltar's economic development.

29. The Kingdom of Spain had subjected Gibraltar to a campaign of pressure designed to make Gibraltar capitulate to its anachronistic sovereignty claim. Such behaviour was a flagrant breach of resolutions 2131 (XX) of 21 December 1965, 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970 and 2734 (XXV) of 16 December 1970. Notwithstanding Gibraltar's differences of opinion with the Kingdom of Spain, the Government of Gibraltar was seeking a process of meaningful and constructive dialogue with the objective of building confidence and trust between the parties. The obstacle to such dialogue was the fact that Spain had persisted in its refusal to recognize that Gibraltarians required and were entitled to full participation in all dialogue about matters that affected their interests.

30. The Government of Gibraltar was willing to participate in dialogue with the United Kingdom and Spain at any time or place provided that, at those talks, the people of Gibraltar would have a separate voice and could therefore speak for themselves through their own constitutionally and democratically elected Government. Spain had taken the attitude that it would discuss Gibraltar only with the United Kingdom and would invite Gibraltar to participate in those talks as part of the British delegation. That position was not acceptable to the Government and people of Gibraltar. The new Gibraltar Government's commitment to dialogue with Spain on a proper basis could not be disputed. Unfortunately, only two weeks previously, talks scheduled to take place in London between the law-enforcement agencies of the United Kingdom, Spain and Gibraltar on the subject of cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking had failed to

materialize following Spain's refusal to participate in the talks because the United Kingdom, Spain and Gibraltar would have their own separate voices. During the current session the Committee should insist that a resolution on Gibraltar should include a reference to the right of a colonized people, i.e. the people of Gibraltar, to have their own voice at such talks.

31. The Papua New Guinea Conference on Decolonization had recommended that any negotiations to determine the status of a Territory should not take place without the active participation of the people of that Territory. Since Spain claimed that the Brussels Agreement was about the future status of Gibraltar, it followed that the people of that Territory must be entitled to active participation in the talks, in other words they should have a voice of their own. It was wrong to urge a dialogue between the administering Power - the United Kingdom - and the third party claimant - Spain - in which the colonized people - the people of Gibraltar - were denied a separate voice of their own.

Mr. Caruana withdrew.

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

Question of Guam (A/C.4/51/3 and Add.1 and 2)

32. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Teehan (Guam Landowners Association) took a place at the petitioners' table.

33. Mr. TEEHAN (Guam Landowners Association), speaking on behalf of Don Parkinson, Speaker of the Twenty-Third Guam Legislature, said that he wished to support the language of the current year's resolution on Guam as approved by the Special Committee on decolonization, and appealed to the members of the Fourth Committee to recommend it to the General Assembly. What most concerned the people of Guam was the increasing pressure by certain highly industrialized powers and their allies to close the International Decade for the Eradication Of Colonialism without accomplishing decolonization for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. With regard to the status of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Guam, there was no legitimate argument that could be made to justify its removal from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, since the indigenous Chamorro people of Guam had yet to determine their political status by way of a full exercise of self-determination.

34. The people of Guam were at a critical juncture in their endeavour to negotiate an improved federal-territorial relationship with their administering Power. The interim political relationship with the United States had been reflected in the Guam Commonwealth Act, the adoption of which was not an exercise in self-determination. Following the ultimate implementation of the Guam Commonwealth Act, Guam would still be a Non-Self-Governing Territory. The Chamorro people's right to self-determination had been provided for in article I, Section 102, of Guam's version of the draft Commonwealth Act which had been approved by the voters of Guam, including non-Chamorros.

35. The decolonization process was severely hampered when administering Powers resisted United Nations efforts to monitor the political, social and economic

development of peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories directly, by means of visiting missions. The first and last visiting mission to Guam had taken place in 1979. It had stimulated the desire of the people of Guam and the United States to greatly expand efforts to resolve numerous issues related to political status.

36. The decolonization efforts of the United Nations were absolutely essential for the successful accomplishment of Guam's quest for self-determination. The removal of Guam from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories or the elimination of the Special Committee on decolonization itself would be a devastating setback for the people of Guam. In that regard, the people of Guam were upset by the current efforts of certain nations to dismantle the Special Committee on decolonization prior to the completion of its mandate. In support of their untenable position, those powers had given the incorrect impression that the remaining non-self-governing peoples would be unable to survive without colonial administration or that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were actually satisfied with their current status.

37. There were other reasons for the attack upon the Committee, namely ensuring that there was no mechanism in place at the United Nations to discuss and dismantle economic, cultural and continued de facto political colonialism. The collective goal of the former colonial Powers was to continue controlling the former colonies in order to guarantee a continuous flow of inexpensive raw materials and cheap labour while at the same time ensuring a stable market for goods from the industrially developed countries. The question arose to what extent the newly acquired independence of third world countries had enabled them to realize their potential for political, cultural and economic development. It would be interesting to know how many of them could truly espouse their positions at the United Nations without pressure or political retaliation from the industrialized countries. The Special Committee had to continue to function fully in the exercise of its mandate until such time as all peoples with a right to self-determination had exercised that right and had become free of unwarranted political, economic and cultural interference and control.

38. Two resolutions of the Guam Legislature were attached to Mr. Parkinson's statement; they indicated the need to continue listing the Chamorro people in the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories pending their exercise of self determination, and the need to support the vital work and continued existence of the Special Committee on decolonization.

39. Mr. Tuchan withdrew.

40. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Howard (Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs, Twenty-Third Guam Legislature) took a place at the petitioners' table.

41. Mr. HOWARD (Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs, Twenty-Third Guam Legislature), speaking as staff assistant on behalf of Senator Hope Alvarez Cristobal, Chairperson of the Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs of the Twenty-Third Guam Legislature, said that the true situation was that the United States had been keeping the Chamorro people ignorant of their rights as a people, a clear violation of its international commitment to keep

indigenous people informed. However, as a result of much work done by representatives of the Chamorro people, the Member States of the United Nations had gained a greater understanding of the question of Guam as reflected in recent General Assembly resolutions. But the sufferings of the Chamorro people had increased, mainly as a result of the administering Power's open-door policy which meant that less that 50 per cent of the population of the Territory were currently indigenous. At the so-called consultation meeting between representatives of the United States Government and representatives of Pacific indigenous peoples held in Honolulu, Hawaii, on 21 August 1996, drafts of the preliminary statement of the United States on the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples had been examined. It emerged from the text of the statement that the United States Government did not support the rights of its indigenous peoples, although it had feigned such support in numerous documents and on numerous occasions. That attitude had been confirmed by specific passages in the statement. Particularly frustrating was the consistent substitution of the term "indigenous peoples" by the term "indigenous persons". Those terms were not interchangeable. The failure of the United States to distinguish between the rights of a "people" and the rights of "persons" had been the most serious obstacle to advancement in relations between the Chamorro people and the United States Government. The non-acceptance of the basic premise that indigenous peoples existed and had collective rights had made the consultation meeting more of a confrontational one. All indigenous representatives at the meeting had been against the United States position.

42. It was no surprise to anyone that the United States agenda for Guam during the past 50 years had been to maintain colonial control over the Territory and its people. The reason was the military-strategic importance of the island. However, one day the Chamorro people would have their say. They understood that responsibility for their destiny lay principally on their own shoulders. They should continue to make their plight known, but, being a small peace-loving nation with limited resources, they could not begin to compete with current events for the attention of the international community. They must continue to rely on the United Nations.

43. Guam had recently been spotlighted in the news because it had been used to conduct cruise missile strikes against Iraq and was currently being used as an entry point for Kurdish refugees to the United States. Because of that, some had hoped that the inhabitants of Guam would be able to win some concessions in their fight for Commonwealth status. According to local press reports, most of the island's inhabitants had not objected to providing Kurds with a safe haven, but the fact that they had been the last to know about those plans was an example of colonialism.

44. Another problem was the return of militarily-held land. A total of 3,200 acres of federal property had been identified as excess and been promised to the Chamorro people since 1977, but just recently the Department of Defense had opposed the Guam Land Return Act, which was currently being examined in the United States Congress. Such action was another example of colonialism on the part of the United States.

45. The current use of the term "people of Guam" instead of "Chamorro people" in United Nations resolutions and other documents referring to the rights of

Guam's people, without identifying who those people were, had led to a misinterpretation of the situation. The Committee should encourage the administering Power to fund an educational campaign on the topic of self-determination and the available status options. The Committee should also encourage another visiting mission to Guam to obtain first-hand information, urge the United States to accept the Guam Commonwealth Act, return land to the Government of Guam and take notice of Guam Legislative Resolution No. 466 commending the work of the United Nations Special Committee on decolonization.

46. Mr. Howard withdrew.

47. The CHAIRMAN said that the criticisms made earlier by Morocco had been taken into consideration by the Secretariat and forwarded to the responsible department. Until clarifications were received from the Secretariat, it would not be possible to make any corrections to the text of the document.

48. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that his delegation did not wish to impede the orderly course of the meeting, and agreed that the consideration of the items on the agenda should continue, with the understanding that speakers would bear his criticism in mind in their statements. At the same time, he expressed the hope that the reply from the Secretariat would be received by the next meeting of the Committee.

49. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Chopra (Brown University) took a place at the petitioners' table.

50. Mr. CHOPRA (Brown University), referring to his statement to the Committee in October 1992, said that the passage of time had had a negative effect on the parties in Western Sahara and on the credibility of the United Nations. The conduct of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had been a departure from the concept of that type of operation and from the long-term evolution of such instruments as "peacekeeping", "peace enforcement" or "peace maintenance". In 1992, large-scale operations had been established concurrently in Cambodia, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. While unprecedented agreements had been concluded committing the Organization to tasks more complex than it had ever faced, it did not have adequate resources to tackle them. Time had shown the truth of his statement that the consequences could be disastrous. Western Sahara was the first operation in which all five of the permanent members of the Security Council had been represented. But power without will was impotent, and Member States had been unable to prevent, and in some cases had actively contributed to, disaster.

51. The consequences of failure of the operation in Western Sahara could be greater than in Cambodia or Somalia. Currently, there were opposing views on the implications of the renewed hostilities between the parties. On the one hand, it had been said that a war would be short, since Morocco was stronger militarily. On the other, it was said that the conflict would be protracted because the tactics of the Frente POLISARIO did not need to rely on the same kind of strength. The experience of two decades of conflict tended to confirm the second of the two possibilities. Conditions in neighbouring countries had changed significantly since the ceasefire in Western Sahara in 1991, but it was not clear what impact more war in that unstable region might have.

52. At the current stage, the mission in Western Sahara was virtually bankrupt. MINURSO had been deployed prematurely in the hope that the mere presence of the United Nations in the field might generate momentum in the peace process and lead to agreement between the parties. That approach had been taken because the parties had not been sufficiently willing to conclude a formal agreement before the deployment of an operation. The United Nations had been entirely reliant on the consent of the parties to implement the plan devised. However, Morocco had delayed the deployment of the Mission in 1991 and had regularly violated the ceasefire throughout 1992. A similar situation had arisen in the identification process, which had been scheduled to begin as a means to generate momentum towards agreement on the unresolved issues in that area. But again, that tactic had not worked: the identification process had been halted.

53. Rather than serving as a catalyst for cooperation, MINURSO had divided the parties almost irreconcilably. The parties, it seemed, had lost the capacity to discuss the substance of the issues. Ensuring consent through the peace process would require direct and comprehensive engagement by the parties, the Security Council and United Nations Member States. Many countries and observers believed that direct talks were the best means of reaching an agreement concerning the conditions for holding a referendum, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the General Assembly had passed resolutions to that effect. Despite Morocco's position on the matter, throughout that period direct or indirect talks had been held in Bamako, Lisbon, New York, At-Ta'if and Marrakesh. Although Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar had managed to organize a meeting in Geneva in June 1990, he had been unable to convince the parties to meet for direct talks, and thereafter, such outstanding issues as identification had been addressed through indirect contacts. Later, in 1993 and 1994, repeated attempts had been made to organize meetings between representatives of each side, but had proved unsuccessful. At the end of summer 1996, another round of "secret talks" had been held, and on 6 September the Secretary-General had announced that direct negotiations were under way between the parties. Delegations had met in Geneva, and then talks had been held in Morocco between a Frente POLISARIO delegation and the highest authorities in the country, including His Majesty King Hassan II and Minister of the Interior Driss Basri. In January 1996, the Secretary-General had proposed to the Security Council a new concept for the process - "open and direct talks", which the Council had approved. A successful framework for the proposed talks should be based on the following principles: the talks must be open and direct and they should be convened with the participation of representatives of Member States, particularly from the Security Council. Member States would preside at the talks and participate in their capacity as "active observers". The number of members and list of each delegation should be agreed to by both parties in advance; either party or a Member State should be able to suspend a meeting if delegations had not been composed in good faith. Each of the parties and Member States could choose private individuals to be present at the meetings without the right to participate in discussions; Member States could call "individual petitioners" to address the meetings in their personal capacity. An agenda with a limited number of items should be established prior to the meetings, and the parties should give full cooperation in ensuring the orderly conduct of meetings, act in good faith and avoid provocations. They should show moderation in their statements to the media. Finally, following each meeting, Member States would

report the results to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council.

54. Mr. Chopra withdrew.

55. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that, since the preceding speaker's statement had been biased, he wished to ask him a few questions. First, there was the question of definitions: of the Sahara as the last African colony and of Morocco as a colonial Power. That was not in keeping with historical fact, since everyone knew which State had been a colonial Power in the region. As a result of the Madrid Agreement, Morocco had managed to recover part of its territory. Secondly, he doubted that Mr. Chopra had read the Secretary-General's report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/1995/986) of 24 November 1995, which stated that the basic obstacle to continuing and completing the identification process related to certain tribal groups and to persons not resident in the Territory in whose identification the Frente POLISARIO did not agree to participate and who, in many instances, had no sheikh or alternate to propose, even though the identification process provided for the participation of a sheikh or alternate from each side and the presence of representatives of the two parties and of an Organization of African Unity (OAU) observer. The operation had been hindered by the inability or unwillingness of any one party to make a sheikh or alternate available at a given time and place. As a result, the identification process had been slow and uneven and, in the last few weeks, had virtually come to a halt. Thus, the main reason for the deadlock was lack of cooperation on the part of Frente POLISARIO, and he wished to know why Mr. Chopra had not referred in his statement to the conclusion contained in the Secretary-General's report.

56. Although Mr. Chopra had spoken of the difficult fate of the people of Western Sahara, he had not said that the Kingdom of Morocco had agreed to hold the referendum even though the referendum concerned part of its own territory. An appropriate settlement plan had been prepared by the Secretary-General, accepted by the two parties and approved by the Security Council. Morocco's only requirement was that all Saharans who had been duly confirmed as belonging to that people should take part in the referendum. That requirement had been confirmed in the aforementioned report of the Secretary-General. The reason for the deadlock was precisely the refusal to take part in the identification process.

57. It had also been said that the situation in Western Sahara was similar to the situation in Somalia with regard to the withdrawal of the United Nations. In his view, there were no grounds for such a comparison since, unlike Somalia, the situation in Western Sahara had remained calm, the population was living in peace and only the civilian component of MINURSO, which had been involved in the identification process, was being withdrawn owing to the fact that the Frente POLISARIO had virtually derailed that process and there was no longer any need for the civilian component.

58. Mr. Chopra had also accused Morocco of violating the ceasefire. However, in his most recent report, the Secretary-General had stated that the ceasefire had been violated by the other party. Mr. Chopra had referred to a previous report of the Secretary-General and had completely ignored his latest report.

59. The criteria to be used in the identification process were contained in the Secretary-General's June 1993 report. The Kingdom of Morocco had been the first to agree to those criteria and also to the proposed compromises.

60. While Mr. Chopra had talked a great deal about a dialogue between the parties, he had not specified what the subject of that dialogue might be. In the opinion of his delegation, it was necessary to return to the settlement plan proposed by the Secretary-General, accepted by the parties and approved by the Security Council.

61. Mr. CHOPRA, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement by the representative of Morocco contained no information that could induce him to alter the content of his earlier statement.

62. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Dryden took a place at the petitioners' table.

63. Mr. DRYDEN said that the situation in Western Sahara provided a clear example of why the American Government had taken such a dismal view of the quality and pace of reform in the United Nations. The identification process, which should have been completed in six months, had been dragging on for over six years at a continuing cost to the United Nations of millions of dollars a month. The only real change that had occurred during that period had been an increase in the level of frustration at the stultifying situation within MINURSO and on the part of observers and interested parties, with the exception of the Kingdom of Morocco.

64. In the 16 years of warfare leading to the ceasefire in 1991, the Moroccan military had been unable to defeat their Saharan adversaries but had nevertheless gained certain advantages. While the search for a political solution to the stalemate was continuing, Morocco was enjoying possession of the enormous phosphate deposits and the rich fishing grounds off the Atlantic coast. Time was on its side. Any delay worked to Morocco's advantage and to the disadvantage of Saharan refugees and the prestige of the United Nations.

65. For several years, there had been problems in the manner in which the lists of voters had been compiled by the Moroccans: there was increasing evidence that the Moroccans were substituting voters for those that they had allowed to register with the Identification Commission. A fair and impartial process was derailed by the fact that access to and exit from United Nations offices was tightly controlled by the Moroccan side. Only those Saharans that the Moroccans allowed could register and, since there were claims that the voting receipts were then surrendered to the Moroccan authorities, there was no assurance that those who did register would be the ones allowed to vote.

66. It had earlier been decided that Morocco and Frente POLISARIO would compile their own lists of voters and then have the names subjected to the decision of the Identification Commission to certify the eligibility of each voter in individual hearings. That process invited corruption and ensured that the referendum would not be held for years under any circumstances. A further major delay had occurred when Morocco had been allowed to submit for consideration an additional 200 per cent of the population of Spanish Sahara in 1974. In that

case, as many as 250,000 people (according to estimates made by the Identification Commission) would have to be considered.

67. Delays had been created for the most specious of reasons. The question of an adverb in the MINURSO schedule had shut down the identification process for a week (at a standard cost of $100,000 per day). The issue had been finally settled by an exchange of formal letters when a simple telephone call would have sufficed. A delay of some 10 weeks had occurred in the summer of 1994 when the Moroccans had disputed the attendance of observers of the Organization of African Unity, despite the fact that the matter had already been settled the year before.

68. Other serious discrepancies had been reported. A virtual siege mentality existed at the MINURSO Force Headquarters in Laayoune. The Mission was not allowed to function independently of the Moroccans. It was the only United Nations Mission where the flag of one of the parties was required to fly alongside that of the United Nations. Telephones had been tapped, mail had been tampered with and the rooms of MINURSO personnel had been searched.

69. Despite continued attempts to report serious problems to United Nations Headquarters at New York, the complaints had been routinely buried in Laayoune by United Nations officials. When finally brought to the attention of Headquarters, they had been dismissed as "not serious". The Inspector General who had arrived in Laayoune to investigate allegations of mismanagement in the structure of the United Nations Mission had been unable to grant protection to any United Nations employees, and thus the testimony of any employee regarding Mission shortcomings would have put that employee's career at risk. An even more glaring weakness was his inability to criticize a Member State, thus making him impotent to correct practically any discrepancy. His report, predictably, was useless, and the idea of an Inspector General who could not truly inspect was an example of the lack of true reforms in the United Nations.

70. The differences between the Moroccans and the Frente POLISARIO in the manner in which they had cooperated (or not) with the Mission formed a startling contrast. Despite clear language in the Mission statement concerning freedom of movement of Mission personnel, the Moroccan side had simply not complied with that requirement. With the Frente POLISARIO, however, freedom of movement had been constrained only in order to draw attention to the Moroccan infringement of that right.

71. In addition, there was a pervasive attitude that should hostilities occur again, the Moroccan army would be the clear victor because of its size and technological advantage. Such considerations had not resulted in a Moroccan victory in the 16 years of fighting, and it did not necessarily follow that they would be victorious at the present time. Any American veteran of Viet Nam, any Russian veteran of Afghanistan and any French veteran of Algeria would be able to confirm the truth of such a view. With the sensitive situation in Algeria to consider as well, a return to conflict could well be devastating to the region as a whole.

72. King Hassan II had shown that he was a wise and experienced leader who had rendered a major service to the cause of peace between Israel and the Arab

world. Just recently, he had received Yasser Arafat on the latter's return from Washington, and he enjoyed, perhaps more than any other leader in the Islamic world, the confidence of the Israeli leadership. Surely if such a great leader were to be made aware of the serious abuses of the process in Western Sahara, he would take concrete steps to correct those mistakes.

73. Mr. Dryden withdrew.

74. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. May (Renaissance Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.

75. Ms. MAY (Renaissance Foundation) said that the major problems underlying the conflict in Western Sahara were multifaceted. Although Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO had agreed in 1988 to a United Nations settlement plan which called for a referendum to be organized and conducted by MINURSO, the Mission's function and effectiveness had been greatly limited. The international community had not devoted proper attention to a conflict involving a gross violation of human rights by one country which had virtually held another country hostage for over 20 years. It was a conflict that had been deemed solvable by ongoing negotiations and the presence of neutral observers. Yet when observers were limited in their access to the regions and peoples being observed, and when negotiations continued to favour the interests of the invading country, perhaps a reassessment of the way in which MINURSO operated was necessary. If the problem was that MINURSO had been undermined by the Moroccan Government to the point where it had become ineffective, then perhaps a reassigning of powers needed to take place. If the problem was that neutral observers and the international press were being kept out through a unilateral decision by Morocco, then perhaps appropriate measures needed to be taken and the international community should insist upon the right to monitor the referendum and voter registration process without hindrance. There were many contradictions in the process. The Moroccan Government had claimed that no intimidation tactics had been used to assess who was eligible to participate in the referendum process, although testimony to the contrary had been given on numerous occasions. United Nations observers and foreign human rights groups reported that Saharans were experiencing difficulty in obtaining Moroccan passports, that the Government monitored the political views of Saharans more closely than those of Moroccan citizens, and that the police and paramilitary authorities reacted with particular harshness against those suspected of supporting independence and the Frente POLISARIO. Another contradiction was that the Moroccan Government claimed that Western Sahara had always been a part of Morocco and that therefore it was entitled to invade a sovereign territory. The Moroccan Government was doing everything in its power to change the outcome of the referendum because it knew what the result of such a vote would be. It knew that, when given the choice between freedom and oppression, the Saharans would vote for freedom. When given the choice of independence and self-determination over a life of captivity, they would choose independence.

76. With the ending of the cold war, the United States of America had begun to be less concerned about conflicts around the world, as it recognized that many of those conflicts had no direct or, in many cases, even indirect effect on it. However, the Congress of the United States had taken an interest in the issue of self-determination for Western Sahara and was concerned that the role of the

United Nations had been reduced to such an extent that it was unable to produce a final resolution to the conflict. Doubts were increasingly expressed as to the need for the United Nations, since it had been seen to be incapable of solving a 20-year-old problem that should have been resolved many years before. If the United Nations was powerless, it was questionable whether there was a need for such an organization. She called for a review to be made of all international directives of the United Nations. The maintenance of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations among States, the achievement of international cooperation in solving humanitarian problems and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms were all relevant today and would remain so into the next century. Regardless of the outcome of a referendum, if there ever was one, it was essential to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict which would take into account the future of the peoples of Western Sahara and Morocco. Such negotiations should take place openly, under the auspices of the international community, and all peoples affected by the conflict should be represented. Whatever might be the result of a potential referendum, the inhabitants of Western Sahara and Morocco would be living together, either in the same country or in neighbouring countries. It was crucial that peaceful resolutions were in place and agreed to even before the holding of a referendum. All of the people must be free not only to register but to participate in the referendum, otherwise the international community might regard the outcome of the referendum as invalid.

77. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) said that the previous speaker had not been entirely accurate in describing the situation concerning passports. United Nations personnel who had applied for visas always received them; moreover, they often left Laayoune without having a Moroccan visa. Referring to her statement concerning the alleged stifling of democracy, he observed that all persons who had dealings with the Frente POLISARIO and who wished to return to Morocco had already done so and were not subject to any repression.

78. Ms. MAY (Renaissance Foundation) explained that it was a question of passports not for United Nations personnel but for inhabitants of Western Sahara who, because they lacked passports, could not travel beyond the borders of the country. She pointed out that those facts were well known to the international community and were reflected in the related report on human rights by the State Department of the United States.

79. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) said that he did not fully understand whether it was people in camps or those living freely in Laayoune who needed passports. The statements by petitioners would deal specifically with the situation of people in camps.

80. Ms. May withdrew.

81. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ahmed (Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO)) took a place at the Committee table.

82. Mr. AHMED (Frente POLISARIO) said that the peace process, which had led to the organization of a referendum on self-determination in 1992, had reached a deadlock at the end of the previous year. Such a situation could not continue

indefinitely, and those involved were at a parting of the ways, with one path leading to peace and the other to war. In his report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General had acknowledged that the conditions for achieving the ultimate objective of the settlement plan, namely the holding of a free and fair referendum, were apparently lacking. The referendum had been deferred, but the Secretary-General considered that the United Nations could not shirk its responsibility and that the international community must in the future demonstrate a willingness not only to provide for peacekeeping in the region but also to make every effort to ensure that the people of Western Sahara were able to determine their future status in such a way as to ensure lasting peace and stability. It was clear that the efforts of the United Nations aimed at ensuring the eventual decolonization of Western Sahara had reached an impasse. All the peoples and States that wished to continue to believe in the United Nations as the most effective forum for the peaceful settlement of conflicts could not remain indifferent in the face of such a deadlock.

83. The referendum on self-determination was to have been held in February 1992. In September 1991 the ceasefire agreement had entered into force and was the first step on the path to the emergence of a peace plan. The Government of Morocco had awaited the opportune moment and had embarked on the implementation of a strategy designed to reconsider key elements of the settlement plan to its own advantage, initiating a press campaign against what it described as "an international plot" against the territorial integrity of Morocco. The Identification Commission had ceased its work, since Morocco wanted to include in the list of participants in the referendum thousands of Moroccan citizens whom it planned to send into the territory. That was the beginning of the process of undermining the initial peace plan. New criteria for the identification of participants in the referendum, which were actively supported by the occupying Power, formed the basis of a process directed by Morocco which could only lead to falsification of the results. In any case, a resumption of the war would be inevitable. The Frente POLISARIO had seriously considered refusing to participate in that process, which no longer had anything in common with the agreed peace plan. However, in the interests of peace, and of cooperation with the Secretary-General and the United Nations, and bearing in mind the views of other States, the taking of a final decision had been deferred. In July 1993, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had suggested a compromise as to the understanding and application of the disputed criteria for identifying participants in the referendum. The identification process had begun.

84. Morocco had sent 181,000 applications to the Identification Commission, which was 250 per cent higher than the 1974 census figure. The United Nations had been able so far to examine some 30,000 applications. The remainder did not satisfy the minimum requirements envisaged by the Secretary-General's compromise decision. As far as the 30,000 applications that had been considered were concerned, the conclusion had been reached that the Identification Commission was confronted with a large-scale forgery designed to undermine confidence in the United Nations and in the referendum. Morocco had more than once demonstrated that it had not intended and did not intend to collaborate with OAU or with the United Nations in their efforts to seek a just and final resolution of the conflict. The postponement of the referendum on self-determination seriously undermined the prospects for a peaceful solution on which the United

Nations had been working for 30 years. The Frente POLISARIO had cooperated in good faith with the efforts of the United Nations and OAU, and was willing to continue to make its contribution so that the spectre of war was replaced by hope for the establishment of a just and lasting peace. A ceasefire with no prospect of establishing a peace plan on a basis of transparency and trust was unacceptable to the Saharan people and to the United Nations. A return to war was not a desirable outcome either for the Frente POLISARIO or for Morocco. The Frente POLISARIO considered that the only way out of that dangerous impasse was a process of direct, serious and responsible negotiations between the two sides. That being so, the Frente POLISARIO wished to continue and intensify a direct dialogue with the Moroccan Government. It called on Morocco to agree to a renewal of dialogue to find a way out of the impasse and to move forward towards a just and comprehensive implementation of the peace plan.

85. Mr. Ahmed withdrew.

86. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to document A/C.4/51/2, containing a letter from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee addressed to him concerning proposed amendments to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. He asked the Member States to submit written proposals on programmes 2, 3 and 23 no later than 14 October 1996.

87. Mr. ALABRUNE (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, objected to the statements made at that meeting by the representative of Papua New Guinea. France had already indicated on more than one occasion that the population of its trust territories, including French Polynesia, had expressed its wish, in the most unambiguous terms, to retain its relationship with France. In that context the questions contained in the statement by Papua New Guinea were out of place.

88. Mr. KATTI (Algeria) said that it was essential to keep to the established procedure and to distribute requests for hearings, including those on the question of Western Sahara, sufficiently in advance.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)
4th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 9 October 1996
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the members of the Committee that he had received a number of communications containing requests for hearings on agenda item 19 concerning New Caledonia (A/C.4/51/4/Add.1) and Western Sahara (A/C.4/51/5/Add.4-8). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

2. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part II, chap. III and IV, Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X, and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2049 and Corr.1-2, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, and 2055-2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/51/4/Add.1)

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wamytan (Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste) took a place at the petitioners' table.

4. Mr. WAMYTAN (Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS)) said that the situation in New Caledonia was being considered in the Fourth Committee for the tenth successive year. It was a well-known fact that in recent years the world had undergone important political and geopolitical changes which had had an impact on the attitude of certain countries towards decolonization. It should be pointed out, however, that the maintenance of the monitoring mechanisms and the implementation of the principles and procedures in the field of decolonization were of major significance for small non-self-governing peoples. The reaffirmation of the right of peoples to self-determination and independence, proclaimed in General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960, through the declaration of the period 1990-2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the period 1995-2005 as the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People was, for the Kanak people and other indigenous peoples who were in a minority in their own country, a guarantee of protection against domination and oppression by the major imperialist Powers, and consequently of the right to liberty, dignity, sovereignty and independence.

5. In the course of their struggle, the Kanak people had always sought the best political compromise, since the alignment of forces did not give it the choice of means to assert its rights to freedom and emancipation. The Matignon Accords concluded in 1988 were made possible not because France had suddenly discovered a desire for decolonization, but as a result of the self-sacrificing struggle of the Kanak people, who, in 1984 and 1988, had rebelled against the

policies of the French Government. It should be noted that the French Government had always disregarded the claims of the Kanak people to its lands and rights, each time citing laws and regulations that only the French could understand. By agreeing to sign the Matignon Accords in 1988, FLNKS had accepted a new challenge, convinced that the plan would help to create conditions which would allow the three partners in the Accords, including France as the administering Power, to bring the process of decolonization to a successful conclusion. During the negotiations which had preceded the adoption of that plan, FLNKS had asked the French Government to take measures which would place New Caledonia in an irreversible process of decolonization that would in the end lead to the full emancipation of the Kanak people.

6. As the time approached for the referendum on the question of self-determination, which was to be held in 1998, it should be noted that, over the past 10 years progress had undeniably been made. The political, technical and financial means made available for development under the Matignon Accords had, for the first time, met the expectations of the Kanak people, who lived for the most part in rural areas and on reservations.

7. While significant results had been achieved in the implementation of the plan, obstacles had been encountered. Over the years, FLNKS and the progressive forces had been unable to mobilize all the political partners in the struggle for the elimination of the imbalances inherent in the colonial system in New Caledonia because of the conservatism of the local right wing, backed by the ultra-conservatism of the French Government. Eight years after the signing of the Matignon Accords, there was still no solution to the fundamental problem, which was the transformation of New Caledonia from a materially dependent State with a trading economy into a State on the true path to development which would realize its potential and create conditions for greater economic and financial self-sufficiency. That would involve a reform of the current fiscal system to ensure that the wealth created locally was used to finance the development of the country. It called for a change in mentality and for citizens of the country to be made responsible for their own development. It also implied a redirection of public resources to development objectives. Public and private funds tended to fall into the hands of a privileged business class that was particularly influential in South Province, which was run by the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR).

8. The exploitation of natural resources, in particular nickel, was the principal economic activity of the country. Despite the fact that the country had 30 per cent of the world's known nickel reserves, its share of the world's semi-finished product was only about 6 per cent. The added value of the metallurgical processing of nickel was totally lost to New Caledonia and was in the hands of foreign companies. For that reason, the Société Minière du Sud Pacifique had developed and submitted to the Prime Minister of France a plan for the construction of a metallurgical plant in the northern part of the country. That plan was currently destabilized because French big business was doing everything possible to prevent the French Prime Minister from fulfilling his commitments.

9. In the social sphere, several reforms still remained to be implemented, in particular in the field of labour legislation and social welfare. The

involvement of the inhabitants of the country, in particular the Kanaks, in economic and social life was one of the priorities. For a long time, the Kanaks had been excluded from the decision-making process and from exercising responsible functions; that ethnic imbalance needed to be rectified rapidly.

10. Special attention should be paid to the question of immigration from metropolitan France and other European countries. The results of the most recent census, published the preceding month, showed that the population of New Caledonia had increased between 1989 and 1996, reflecting, inter alia, the immigration of 15,000 persons from metropolitan France. That situation was fraught with very serious consequences, since the immigrants were able to vote and could form pressure groups to influence the outcome of the 1998 referendum. Moreover, in the economic and social spheres, those categories of immigrants took jobs, thereby accentuating the phenomena of social exclusion and marginalization, the victims of which were the country's indigenous inhabitants, especially Kanak young people.

11. As to the land ownership question, a number of clans and tribes had been able to increase their land holdings and recover ancestral lands as a result of land reforms carried out between 1978 and 1996. Nevertheless, per capita land holdings in rural areas were twice as large for Europeans as for Kanaks, whose average holding was about 500 hectares. FLNKS continued to demand that the French authorities take the necessary measures to allow land reform to go forward.

12. France had stated in various international forums since 1988 that the decolonization of New Caledonia was proceeding on the basis of the Matignon Accords. That assertion was, however, fraudulent. To date no irreversible process had been initiated. The only solution that would provide political stability was for New Caledonia to accede to the status of a sovereign and independent State. That conviction was shared by the Kanak people not only because accession to independence and sovereignty would enable it to re-establish the continuity of its history, but also because it was the only way to guarantee political and institutional stability, which was the necessary condition for lasting economic and social development.

13. It should be brought to the Committee's attention that France was persisting in its refusal to assume its historical responsibility to the Kanak people and that it was still unwilling to give the country the right to the exercise of sovereignty and independence. In the course of the negotiations between the principal signatories of the Matignon Accords which had begun on 16 February 1996 each side had presented its position. RPCR had proposed a status of autonomy and an expansion of powers over 30 years. FLNKS had advocated sovereignty and independence for New Caledonia as from 1998, with the terms and conditions to be defined. The Prime Minister of France, Alain Juppé, declared on 19 April 1996 that granting New Caledonia the status of an independent State was incompatible with the search for a solution by consensus. He had proposed a statute providing for wide autonomy and increased powers for local institutions, economic assistance and the postponement of the vote on self-determination to some unspecified future date. FLNKS had then decided to suspend its participation in the discussions with the other two signatories of the Accords, because it considered France's position to be unacceptable.

Acceptance of that proposal would, in effect, go against the wishes of the French people, who in the referendum of 9 November 1988 had encouraged the representatives of the French State to give favourable consideration both to the option of accession by the country to independence and to the alternative option. In taking that step, FLNKS had affirmed at the same time that the settlement of the dispute between the Kanak people and France and of the question of accession by New Caledonia to sovereignty and independence was moving to the search for a negotiated solution that was mutually acceptable. Two months later, the Government of France had acceded to the FLNKS demand and a new framework for negotiations had been defined giving preference in the first stage to bilateral discussions between France and FLNKS. At the centre of those discussions were the issues of the settlement of the colonial dispute and the process for the country's accession to independence. In the second stage, discussions would be widened to include RPCR and the other political forces in the country.

14. He called upon the General Assembly to lend its assistance in seeking to ensure that France discharged its historical responsibility vis-à-vis New Caledonia in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions.

15. Mr. Wamytan withdrew.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part II, chap. III and IV, Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X, and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2049 and Corr.1 and Corr.2, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, and 2055-2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, S/1996/343 and 674)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VIII) and A/51/316 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (continued) (A/51/23 (Part III, chap. V and VII))

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and A/51/212; A/AC.109/L.1853; E/1996/85)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/51/3 (chap. V, sect. A)

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/51/373)

16. Mr. GUANI (Uruguay) said that the overwhelming majority of Member States which had taken part in the general debate in the Committee in recent years had recognized the usefulness of visiting missions in identifying a variety of problems faced by different peoples and Territories. Particular attention should be paid at the current session to the practice of dispatching visiting missions with the aim of ensuring that the needs and wishes of the peoples concerned were taken into account in any final decisions affecting their futures.

17. On the question of New Caledonia, he expressed satisfaction at a number of positive changes that had taken place, such as improvements in the process for reviewing the Matignon Accords through more frequent coordinating meetings. Cooperation between the parties in the fields of housing construction, employment, vocational training and public health were helping to lay the foundations for the self-determination of the Territory.

18. Tokelau was a textbook example of the self-determination of a Territory. The cooperation between the administering Power, the population of the Territory and the United Nations could be described as exemplary.

19. With regard to Western Sahara, he deeply regretted the halting of the peace process initiated under the auspices of the United Nations and aimed at holding a referendum on self-determination. Uruguay affirmed its decisive support for that peace plan and its implementation on the basis of the agreed principles. The process of identification on the basis of the results of the 1974 census should be renewed. The dialogue between the parties recently begun in Rabat offered a unique opportunity for the main parties to the conflict to reach final agreement on the measures that needed to be taken to activate the process.

20. Uruguay, which maintained traditional links with Argentina and excellent relations with the United Kingdom, continued to be concerned over the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), and again called on the parties to continue the negotiating process, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization.

21. Uruguay was convinced that any decision in the field of decolonization must be accompanied by concrete efforts to ensure the stable development of the Territories receiving full autonomy. The cooperation of Member States, and especially of administering Powers, was exceptionally important in that respect, as was assistance from the specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations system.

22. Uruguay proposed that consideration should be given to transferring the resources released as a result of the end of the decolonization process to the provision of assistance to countries that had recently attained autonomy and were encountering difficulties in the development process.

23. Mr. WILMOT (Ghana) expressed agreement with the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Committee on decolonization contained in the report on its work, and called on the administering Powers to cooperate with it in order to promote the interests of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. He supported the Special Committee's call on the administering

Powers to continue meeting their commitments under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations regarding the regular transmission to the Secretary-General of information on the administered Territories. Such information, together with the findings of the Special Committee's special missions to those Territories, would enable it to ascertain the wishes of the people concerned and the extent to which those wishes were being promoted.

24. In the interests of international peace and security, Ghana called for peaceful negotiations between those Powers vying for control of some Non-Self-Governing Territories. At the same time, those Powers must be reminded that there was no alternative to self-determination. Therefore, the peoples of the Territories concerned had to be directly involved in any negotiations.

25. His delegation acknowledged and commended the valuable cooperation extended by the Government of New Zealand to the Special Committee. He welcomed the fact that New Zealand had declared its intention to abide by the wishes of the people of Tokelau, and expressed the hope that other administering Powers would follow that example.

26. His delegation shared the conviction of the Special Committee that military bases and installations in the Territories concerned could constitute an obstacle to the exercise by the people of those Territories of their right to self-determination. It was therefore pleased to learn from the Committee's report of the downsizing of some such bases. Ghana encouraged administering Powers with bases in Non-Self-Governing Territories to reduce them drastically with a view to their eventual withdrawal.

27. His delegation was gravely concerned at the continuing lack of progress in relation to the question of Western Sahara. The people of that Territory had to be given an opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination. Ghana's position on that question was fully in consonance with decisions of the Organization of African Unity. In its view, the settlement plan agreed to by the parties to the conflict under the auspices of the United Nations remained the best option for pursuing a long-lasting solution in the interests of the people of Western Sahara and for the sake of peace and security in the region. Ghana was concerned at the absence of any signs of the resumption of the work of the Identification Commission. It reiterated its call for continued dialogue, which was essential in order to break the stalemate, and once more called on the parties to engage in direct talks that could open the way for the continuation of the identification process.

28. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the United Nations could be legitimately proud of its action and its decisive contribution to decolonization in the world. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 had laid a doctrinal and legal foundation which had enhanced the capacity of the Organization to promote the decolonization process. It was necessary today to reaffirm the collective commitment to the full implementation of that resolution and to reiterate the particular responsibilities of the United Nations towards the colonial peoples and Territories.

29. That responsibility was of special importance in the case of Western Sahara, in view of the fact that it was precisely the United Nations that had

decided to take up the search for a just and lasting solution on the basis of the Settlement Plan adopted by the two parties to the conflict, Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, with a view to enabling the people of Western Sahara to exercise its right to self-determination through the organization of a free, fair and impartial referendum. Despite sustained and persevering efforts, numerous problems had led to a dangerous derailment of the settlement plan. That had happened because the psychological barriers between the two parties to the conflict had not yet been removed and a climate of confidence and the political environment conducive to the establishment of the peace process had not yet been created. There was a need to organize direct talks between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO.

30. Algeria had constantly called for a peaceful solution to the conflict between the two brotherly nations of Morocco and Western Sahara as the only way of preserving peace and stability in the region. The future of the Maghreb countries could be assured only within a strong, united and homogeneous union capable of meeting the legitimate expectations of the peoples of the region. As a neighbouring country and an official observer of the implementation of the settlement plan, Algeria was acting with a high sense of responsibility to promote a climate which would facilitate the implementation of the peace plan in conditions of credibility, transparency and impartiality.

31. The international community, the Security Council and the General Assembly were called upon to take swift and determined action to safeguard the peace process. The General Assembly should use its moral and political authority to salvage the stalled peace process and to reaffirm its commitment to the strict and integral implementation of the settlement plan. The Secretary-General should call for make further efforts for the integral implementation of the settlement plan for the holding of a free and impartial referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara. The international community's efforts should aim at ensuring the continued presence of MINURSO and at providing it with all necessary means to enable it to carry out its mandate. It was beyond any doubt that the definitive solution of the problem of Western Sahara with strict respect of the right of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence would give new impetus to the construction of the Arab Maghreb Union and thereby promote the stability and concord that the region so badly needed.

32. Mr. WIRAJUDA (Indonesia) said that, despite the remarkable success achieved in the field of decolonization, the question of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories must not be overlooked. Many of those Territories were small islands with their own characteristics and problems. The fragility of their economies and ecologies made them uniquely vulnerable and demanded particular attention on the part of the administering Powers. It had always been the firm position of Indonesia that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was equally applicable to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the General Assembly had time and again reiterated its position that such factors as the geographical location, the territorial size, the size of the population and limited resources should not impede the exercise of the right of self-determination in those Territories.

33. In recent years it had become necessary to give priority not only to national independence and the exercise of self-determination but also to other pressing tasks such as achieving self-reliance and economic growth. In an era of globalization and interdependence there was a need to revitalize dialogue between the developed and the developing countries, on the basis of genuine interdependence, mutual interests and equitably shared responsibilities. South-South cooperation should be broadened and strengthened for the benefit of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that regard, Indonesia was pleased to state that its technical assistance programme would be expanded and strengthened.

34. The specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system played a significant role in expediting economic and social progress in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Such assistance was an indispensable component of making peoples self-sustaining. His delegation had also taken note of the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance. Its recommendations were an invaluable source of information in assisting the Special Committee on decolonization in fulfilling its mandate effectively.

35. Indonesia remained confident that fostering closer cooperation with the administering Powers could only strengthen the United Nations by enhancing the spirit of consensus and cooperation. It believed that the United Nations today more than ever played a crucial role in bringing the last remnants of colonialism to an end.

36. Mr.DOUDECH (Tunisia) said that the United Nations had achieved significant successes in the field of decolonization, as a result of which many peoples had thrown off the yoke of colonialism and exercised their right to self-determination. The Organization was justifiably proud of those successes and sought to continue them so that the peoples of the world could finally free themselves from colonialism. Since the 1950s, when decolonization had begun, the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories had changed significantly, but the principles of the freedom and self-determination of peoples had not lost their relevance. So long as colonialism persisted in whatever form, the United Nations would remain responsible for continuing its action in that sphere.

37. In that regard, a highly important role was played by the Special Committee, whose mandate had been defined by the General Assembly in resolution 1654 (XVI) of 27 November 1961. The Special Committee was required to follow political, economic and social developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to report to the General Assembly on the progress achieved. Thus, the Special Committee represented a channel through which the States Members of the United Nations could obtain information on the progress of decolonization in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, take the relevant decisions. Consequently, that body continued to play a highly important role in ensuring that the Organization maintained continuing contact with the population of those Territories. It was also important that all the relevant parties maintained relations of cooperation and trust with each other.

38. He noted, in that regard, that the petitioners wishing to address the Committee were encountering financial difficulties. His delegation considered

that that issue should receive special attention so that the relevant decision could be taken. Although the referendums represented one of the most effective forms of ascertaining the will of the peoples of the small Territories, the United Nations must not foist the holding of a referendum upon them or deprive them of the right to resort to any other legitimate means of protecting their interests. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which had the inalienable right to self-determination, in many cases preferred not to rush into a decision on their future relations with the administering Powers and sought to retain the status quo. Such an approach could be explained by the fact that any changes in the political status could cause the rupture of economic and financial links that were beneficial to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Investment and entrepreneurship in the small Territories had enabled many of them to build a dynamic economy. Tunisia considered that the most appropriate form of obtaining information on the future political status chosen by the population of a Territory was the holding of consultations under the auspices of the United Nations and with its cooperation. Work to that end would make it possible to resolve the task facing the United Nations of eliminating colonialism by the year 2000.

39. As to the role of the Special Committee, his delegation felt that that Committee must adjust its procedures to take into account current realities, and welcomed the work which had already been done recently to rationalize procedures. In 1996 the Special Committee had included in its programme of work consideration of the proposal for the integration of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance with the Special Committee. That step would make it possible to avoid unnecessary duplication and achieve further rationalization of work in the spirit of the reforms taking place in the Organization.

40. Mr. NUÑEZ-MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that the decolonization process was one of the areas in which the United Nations had achieved considerable success. The work was not yet completed, however, and the fact that only three years before the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism there were still 17 Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories should give rise to concern.

41. At the recent high-level Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Colombia, the Heads of State or Government had particularly stressed the right of peoples under colonial domination to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and had confirmed the obligation of their countries to take steps to accelerate the process leading to the complete eradication of colonialism.

42. In 1996 the Committee, despite various limitations, inadequate resources and the obstacles it faced, had done important work. One of the most significant steps taken by the Committee had been the organization of the Pacific Regional Seminar held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The seminar had provided an opportunity to gain firsthand information about the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and make very useful contacts with prominent figures and experts from the region. Cuba supported the idea of holding such

seminars and felt that it was necessary for the Committee to have sufficient resources for their organization. He expressed the hope that in 1997 it would be possible to hold a seminar for the Caribbean countries.

43. Another important result of the Committee's work was the enhanced quality of the resolutions submitted for adoption. In addition, mention should be made of the visiting missions sent to Non-Self-Governing Territories. Those missions were a very important mechanism for the Organization in the field of decolonization. At the Pacific Regional Seminar, the willingness of the Chamorro people to accept a visiting mission to Guam had been confirmed; it was to be hoped that the mission would be sent to the Territory in the near future.

44. One of the important items on the agenda was the item entitled "Activities of foreign economic and other interests which impede the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in Territories under colonial domination". The General Assembly had repeatedly confirmed the duty of the administering Powers to ensure the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of those Territories and to protect the human and natural resources of those Territories. Nevertheless, there were many examples which demonstrated that foreign circles were exploiting natural and human resources to the detriment of the legitimate interests of the inhabitants of those Territories. In the same context reference should be made also to military activity, including the existence of foreign military bases in those Territories, which posed a threat not only to their population, but also to international peace and security. Such bases must be eliminated.

45. Cuba noted with satisfaction the direct contacts between the representatives of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO which, it was to be hoped, would soon lead to a just settlement of the conflict in Western Sahara.

46. It should be noted that the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories did not include Puerto Rico. Cuba confirmed its support for the achievement of independence by Puerto Rico; it hoped that the United Nations would duly contribute to that process.

47. Mr. MARRERO (United States of America) said that since its founding, the United Nations had brought a full measure of self-government to hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. The United States fully supported the right of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-government. In 1960 the United States had abstained in the vote on the original resolution on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples because it reflected a narrow political agenda and did not take into account the wide variety of situations facing those Territories. Unfortunately, 36 years later the United States still faced the same concerns.

48. In 1960 the United States had not believed that a single standard of decolonization applied. It did not believe so now. Words like "subjugation", "domination" and "exploitation" did not capture the relationship between Member States that were responsible for the administration of Territories and the people of those Territories. Those words ignored the tremendous political, economic and social changes which the past 36 years had brought to the people of

those Territories. At the same time, it could not automatically be assumed that the goal of eradicating colonialism was relevant to most or all of the Territories that remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United States had found from its experience as an administering Power that the people of the majority of those Territories understood that independence was not the only possible outcome of self-determination. They understood that their choices were not circumscribed by the three options set out in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960.

49. The United States had been encouraged by the words of the representatives of the Special Committee on decolonization at the beginning of the debate. They had spoken of the need to keep the Special Committee's programme of work under constant review and to consider new and pragmatic approaches to the issues facing that Committee. While some progress had been achieved in that direction, overall the resolutions and decisions presented by the Special Committee did not adequately reflect the reality in the Territories under consideration. In most cases, events had overtaken the Special Committee's work. The peoples of the majority of those Territories had exercised their right to self-determination by repeatedly electing Governments that supported the status quo. They had made a responsible choice through free and democratic processes. The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Special Committee should reflect that reality.

50. The result would be fewer Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, an outcome which his country would welcome. In the interests of efficiency, in a spirit of reform, and without prejudice to the interests of the people of the Territories that would remain on the list, the Committee should consider whether to hear petitioners from those Territories directly. It should also consider how much longer it needed to continue operating through the filter of a Special Committee set up more than 30 years previously in circumstances that no longer existed. The Committee should not seek ways to prolong the existence of the Special Committee on decolonization once the immediate challenge of decolonization had been met, as had been suggested earlier in the debate. It was within the scope of the Committee to hear petitioners directly.

51. The peoples of a majority of the Non-Self-Governing Territories no longer viewed - if indeed they had ever viewed - the activities of foreign economic interests or the presence of military installations in their Territory as detrimental to their interests. Indeed, the socio-economic problems of those Territories were the same as those faced by small island States everywhere. They did not stem from a colonial past or present and could be addressed by the same mechanisms - United Nations or other - that were used to address socio-economic problems in the small island States. The resolutions dealing with those issues should be deferred since they bore no specific relationship to the work of the Committee and contained conclusions which were not supported by the facts.

52. His delegation recognized that United Nations visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, carried out at an appropriate time and in consultation with the administering Power, were one method of ascertaining the situation in those Territories. The possibility of sending such missions should be kept under review, but during the current year the Special Committee had taken the unnecessary step of adopting a new resolution calling on administering

Powers to receive United Nations visiting missions in the Territories under their administration. That approach did not reflect the reality on the ground, which was that visiting missions were unnecessary in almost every case. In addition, the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services after the 1995 seminar regarding the efficacy and value of holding such seminars away from Headquarters in New York needed to be taken into account. That practice entailed unnecessary expenditure and undermined the collective efforts of Member States to reform the United Nations.

53. His delegation was prepared to support resolutions and decisions that reflected the reality of 1996 without prejudice to the right of the United Nations to consider the situation in those Territories which remained a legitimate concern of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

54. The statement by the representative of Cuba had included some remarks about the colonial status of Puerto Rico; he wished to remind the Committee that the political status of Puerto Rico had been examined at repeated plebiscites, most recently in 1993. The results of those plebiscites had shown that there were few supporters of independence in Puerto Rico. The vast majority of Puerto Ricans supported the status quo, which meant that the issue had no bearing on the Committee's work.

55. Mr. FORERO (Colombia) said that the work done by the United Nations during its first 50 years had been of considerable assistance to a number of Member States in gaining their independence, but that did not mean that the Organization should rest on its laurels and discontinue its efforts in that direction. Its work in the field of decolonization should continue for as long as the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories needed it. All States were obliged to abide by the principles set forth in the Charter regarding the rights of peoples to self-determination. It was therefore extremely important to provide every assistance to the Special Committee in the discharge of its mandate. Cooperation between the administering Powers and the Committee was the most effective way of promoting the formation of realistic ideas about the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The contacts between the Special Committee and New Zealand were an example of such constructive dialogue.

56. It was important to ensure that the Non-Self-Governing Territories possessed the resources to achieve economic and social development on the basis of respect for their culture and the preservation of their environment. In that connection, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and the Heads of Delegations of the Non-Aligned Countries, at the Conference held recently in New York, had once again called on the international community to protect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories moving towards the attainment of self-determination, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions, and in particular, resolution 46/181, in which the General Assembly had adopted a plan of action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism; made an urgent appeal to the administering Powers to take appropriate measures to ensure political, constitutional, economic, social and educational progress for the inhabitants of those Territories; and urged the establishment of an effective mechanism for coordinating the activity of organs of the United Nations system and those of

the administering Powers. They had also reiterated that any attempt to undermine national unity and violate the territorial integrity of any country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

57. Mr. PÉREZ-GRIFFO (Spain), recalling the statement made to the Committee by Mr. Peter Caruana, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, said that his Government's position on the question of Gibraltar had not changed. It was well known to members of the Committee and had been reflected in the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain during the general debate and in his own statement to the Special Committee on decolonization.

58. In his statement, the Chief Minister had spoken of the wish of the people of Gibraltar to take part in the negotiating process and had pointed out that only the two sovereign States - Spain and the United Kingdom - were participating in the negotiations. The issue was how best to include the people of Gibraltar in such a framework. A reasonable formula had been elaborated in Brussels whereby the people of Gibraltar would have been allowed to attend the talks and take part in them. However, since Gibraltar could not be regarded as a sovereign State, its people could hardly discuss issues which were not within their sphere of competence. It was therefore necessary to reiterate that the local authorities in Gibraltar had excluded themselves from the negotiating process by attempting to impose on Spain elements of a political nature which lay outside their powers. Spain, however, felt a deep respect for the people of Gibraltar and it hoped that they would be able to join in the negotiating process at the earliest possible opportunity.

59. Mr. ARKWRIGHT (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom, which had 10 dependent Territories, remained firmly committed to the principle of self-determination, reflecting the wishes of the people concerned and exercised in accordance with the other principles and rights set out in the Charter of United Nations, as well as other treaty obligations. His delegation had listened with interest to the opening statement made by the Chairman of the Special Committee and had noted that Committee's emphasis on flexible, innovative and pragmatic solutions to the situation of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. He was therefore surprised that, despite some welcome changes to the texts of the resolutions and decisions before the Committee, many still contained language which suggested that the Special Committee was not prepared to accept the realities of the situation in the Territories and was unwilling to respond to the wishes of the people there.

60. The Chairman of the Special Committee had referred to the conclusions of the seminar held in Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) which, in particular, acknowledged that political options other than independence were open to the Territories. His delegation continued to wait, with growing impatience, for the day when the Special Committee finally accepted that the vast majority of Territories under its purview were content with the status quo and with the level of self-government they had achieved, and that there was no need to inform them that they should throw off the so-called yoke of colonialism and alien subjugation.

61. The United Kingdom had a good record on decolonization and continued to take very seriously its obligations under the Charter in that connection. It regularly transmitted information on the Territories to the Special Committee, as required by Article 73 e of the Charter, and welcomed the fact that its efforts in that regard had been recognized in some of the resolutions put forward by the Special Committee. Within the constraints of treaty obligations, his country remained firmly committed to ensuring, in cooperation with the locally elected Governments, that the constitutional frameworks of its dependent Territories continued to meet the interests and wishes of their peoples. In each of the Territories, regular and free elections were held in which all parties were at liberty to advocate any constitutional proposals they wished. There was therefore no need for the Special Committee to request constitutional reviews or political education programmes or referendums designed to ascertain the views of the peoples of the British dependent territories. The United Kingdom was prepared to consider any proposals put forward by the people themselves.

62. The United Kingdom also took seriously its obligations in responding to the economic needs of its dependent Territories. The reasonable economic and financial needs of those Territories remained a priority in its aid programme. In that regard, despite some improvements, the content of the draft resolution submitted to the Committee on the question of foreign economic interests was once again disappointing in that it essentially ignored the benefits that foreign economic interests could bring to dependent Territories. Many elected Governments in the dependent Territories expended considerable efforts to attract foreign investment, recognizing the benefits it brought. The Special Committee should recognize the positive role of foreign investment, especially in small island States which had limited capital and few natural resources of their own. His delegation urged the Special Committee not to reject wholesale any amendments put forward by the European Union in an attempt to redress the bias in the draft resolution.

63. Mr. PHANIT (Thailand) said that, although there was no alternative, in the decolonization process, to the principle of the right to self-determination, there were some constructive options for the exercise of that right as identified in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), namely independent statehood, free association with an independent State, and integration with an independent State. Serious thought should be given to those alternatives in order to move things forward. In that connection, Thailand welcomed the positive developments in Tokelau, whose people favoured self-determination through free association with New Zealand. Apart from Tokelau, however, little progress towards self-determination and the eradication of colonialism had been achieved in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

64. One important factor in the success of the decolonization process was the attainment of self-sufficiency in terms of economic development; in that connection, assistance should be provided to the newly sovereign States by the United Nations, the administering Powers and other Member States. Through the Thai International Cooperation Programme, his country was ready to render assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories on request. The gathering of information on the political, economic and social situation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories was also very important for the success of the

decolonization process. In that connection, he regretted to note that not many visiting missions had been sent to the Territories for that purpose and that there were delays in the transmission of information by the administering Powers to the Secretary-General in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter. In the age of modern communications technology, such delays were unacceptable. Nevertheless, Thailand firmly believed that all items on decolonization would be deleted from the agenda of the General Assembly by the year 2000, if not earlier.

65. Mr. HE Yafei (China) said that, during the remaining years of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, an undoubtedly arduous and pressing task had to be addressed, namely that of completing the process of decolonization, which would require vigorous efforts by the international community. In that connection, his Government maintained that: the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had an inalienable right to self-determination and independence on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations and of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV); that the provision of assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in establishing a sound economic basis was an important element in the decolonization process; that no country had the right to station forces or establish military bases and installations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories; and that the dissemination of information on decolonization and enhanced understanding by the Special Committee of the living conditions and wishes of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories contributed to the attainment of the goals set forth in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Until such time as the great goal of decolonization had finally been attained, no reform of the United Nations should be allowed to divert attention from the question of decolonization.

66. Mr. KOLOI (Botswana) said that both parties to the conflict shared responsibility for the stalemate in the implementation of the Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. It would be in the best interests of both the Saharan people and the Kingdom of Morocco to resume the identification process immediately and complete it. Along with the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity was playing an important role in the Western Sahara peace process and Botswana hoped that it would continue to encourage accommodation between the parties. It was important for the parties to be satisfied at each stage that the identification process was free and fair. In that connection Botswana encouraged both the Frente POLISARIO and the Kingdom of Morocco to resort to dialogue, of whatever form, so that the identification process could be resumed.

67. Mr. SOAL (South Africa) said that his delegation remained disturbed at the ongoing impasse in the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara and also at the reduction in the strength of the military component of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and urged that nothing should be done that might be interpreted as a dwindling resolve by Member States to find a solution to the dispute. In that regard, it was heartening that the ceasefire was still holding as that would continue to serve as a basis to move the peace process forward. South Africa joined others in encouraging the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to enter into high-level negotiations so as to pave the way for the resumption of the

identification process and the achievement of a final solution which would be acceptable to the international community.

68. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that any proposals under item 19 and proposals and amendments regarding the Special Committee's recommendations must be submitted no later than 4 p.m. on Wednesday, 16 October.

69. Mr. ARKWRIGHT (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that in his statement the representative of Uruguay had expressed the wish to find a solution with regard to the Falkland, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands. The United Kingdom's position was well known. It had been set forth by the United Kingdom delegation in exercise of the right of reply in the plenary session of the General Assembly in connection with the statement by the representative of Argentina on 24 September 1996.

70. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) recalled that the Secretariat had promised to reply to his inquiry.

71. Mr. KHAN (Secretary of the Committee) read out information provided by the Secretariat in response to the inquiry by the representative of Morocco, with appropriate explanations.

72. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) thanked the Committee secretariat for the information provided, and said that he wished to make two comments: first, his delegation was not able to obtain Security Council reports in the meeting room and had been forced to go to the documents distribution service for the necessary report, where it was not always possible to obtain reports straightaway. Second, the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/428) covered the period from 5 October 1995 to 30 September 1996. The Secretariat had indicated that it had begun with the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986), but the latest report (A/51/428) did not reproduce either the contents or the context of that document. In paragraph 2 of the report of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986), it was noted that the basic obstacle to the completion of the identification process was the unwillingness of the Frente POLISARIO to participate in the identification of certain tribal groups and persons not resident in the Territory for which, in many cases, the Frente POLISARIO had no sheikh or alternate to propose. That paragraph was extremely important for Morocco, and was linked with paragraph 3 of the report of the Secretary-General of 27 September 1996 (A/51/428), which referred to the report of the Secretary-General of 8 September 1995 (S/1995/779) in which he had stated that MINURSO had an obligation to consider all applications that had been correctly submitted.

73. Thus, in his report to the Security Council of 8 September 1995 (S/1995/779), the Secretary-General had stressed that MINURSO had an obligation to consider all applications that had been correctly submitted, and had suggested to MINURSO that in circumstances where the Frente POLISARIO was unwilling or unable to make a sheikh available, identification should be based on documentary evidence. Paragraph 48 stressed that obligation of MINURSO. Meanwhile, the proposal made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 49 did not correspond to the second part, because of the lack of a link between the Secretary-General's September and November reports. In paragraph 49 it was

stated that technically, there would be no obstacle to organizing identification sessions in various places within or outside the Territory, wherever the bulk of the applicants resided. The practice could continue of calling on two tribal leaders (sheikhs) from the tribal subgroup concerned, but those would not invariably be drawn one from each side, as had been the practice up to then. Were identification to take place without their participation, it would be necessary, for the process to have credibility, to insist on the submission of documentary evidence, such as a birth certificate, to establish that the individual was indeed the child of a Saharan father, and some supporting evidence as to the father's birth in the Territory. The Frente POLISARIO would, of course, be invited to observe the proceedings.

74. The Security Council, in the preamble to resolution 1017 (1995) of 22 September 1995, had taken note of paragraph 49 of the Secretary-General's report of 8 September 1995 (S/1995/779). The draft resolution concerning the report of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986), contained in document S/1995/1013 of 19 December 1995, came out in support of the Secretary-General's proposal in that report. He wished to know why that document had not been referred to since it was an official document of the Security Council. He also wished to receive clarification about why the summary of the memorandum from Morocco included in paragraph 31 of the report (A/51/428) referred to Morocco's willingness to cooperate, but made no mention of the problem of the responsibility of the Identification Commission and of the fact that the identification had been halted through no fault of Morocco's.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)
5th meeting held on Thursday, 10 October 1996 at 3 p.m. New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of Western Sahara (continued) (A/C.4/51/5/Add.4-8; A/AC.109/2059)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Barazani took a place at the petitioners' table.

2. Mr. BARAZANI explained that, as an early member of the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), he had held many important positions, but after the uprisings of 1988 in the refugee camps, in which he had participated, he had broken away and been imprisoned. He stated that the Frente POLISARIO had failed to adapt to the new world situation and that its leaders had been born and raised in Morocco, not in the provinces then occupied by Spain. The International Court of Justice had clearly recognized the ties of allegiance between the tribes of Western Sahara and the sultans of Morocco, and the sovereignty of Morocco over the Saharan provinces.

3. The Frente POLISARIO was a totalitarian organization responsible for the death and torture of thousands of Saharans, purging all political opposition, even within its own ranks. Refugees had been brought to the camps in the Tindouf area and kept there by force, and they were subjected to a police regime and experiments in radical communism: collectivism and destruction of the family unit.

4. The Frente POLISARIO inflated the numbers of persons living in the camps in order to receive increased international aid, which was then diverted towards neighbouring countries: southern Algeria, northern Mauritania and Mali. Although it claimed that the Saharan population was 750,000 persons, it was demanding a referendum based on the Spanish census listing only 74,000 persons. That would deny many Saharan tribes the right to vote, yet many of the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO had not been included in the 1974 census either. In addition, there was a large Saharan population in Morocco.

5. The leadership of the Frente POLISARIO was in fact trying to avoid a referendum where all Saharans would participate, because they would vote to confirm their ties to Morocco and end the exile imposed by the Frente POLISARIO to serve its own interests. The speaker demanded that those persons kept prisoner in the Tindouf area should be freed and allowed to return to their country, Morocco, as so many of their fellow Saharans had already done.

6. Mr. Barazani withdrew.

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mrs. Ebbi took a place at the petitioners' table.

8. Mrs. EBBI said that she had been born in Western Sahara and had lived from 1975 to 1989 in the camps in the Tindouf area, where she had been President of the Organization of Saharan Women and a member of the Political Bureau of the Frente POLISARIO from 1985 to 1989. She had managed to escape from the camps, with great difficulty, in 1990. She wished to condemn the atrocities committed by an organization of criminals which had destroyed the values system of an established and peaceful society. The victims were the Saharan people, especially women, children and the elderly.

9. Women played an important role in the Frente POLISARIO's revolution and, although presented to the world as free and emancipated in order to obtain aid, they were exploited and enjoyed neither respect nor human rights; their children were the property of the organization from birth until the time they were sent away to war. Women in the camps in the Tindouf area were simple reproductive machines to provide soldiers for the war and were subject to detention and torture, the worst atrocities having been committed in October 1988 when the President of the Frente POLISARIO had ordered his armies to surround and occupy the camps and detain and torture the women. Their only crime had been to demand democracy, freedom and the release of those persons condemned to life imprisonment or even death, without a fair trial, often without having committed any offence.

10. No organization which claimed to defend the rights of women and children and the dignity of a people, should act in such an inhumane way. Enforced detention and restricting freedom of movement were attacks against basic human rights. Many Saharan women had been imprisoned for refusing to follow the organization's orders or for having had children illegally.

11. Her own experience in the camps had led her to denounce the tragedy which had befallen the Saharan people in the Tindouf area to international organizations, especially those concerned with refugees. She hoped that those organizations would help Saharans who wished to do so to leave the camps in Tindouf and decide their own destiny.

12. Mrs. Ebbi withdrew.

13. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boida took a place at the petitioners' table.

14. Mr. BOIDA said that he had been in charge of the Frente POLISARIO's education department but, after becoming disillusioned by the Frente POLISARIO's repressive tactics, had been imprisoned and tortured for more than five years, without ever being charged or judged.

15. He had then been forced to work four years in a jail/school called "Twelfth of October", where some 1,700 students, separated from their families, were being indoctrinated to become fanatical soldiers. Between the ages of 14 to 16 the children were forced to go to other military schools, isolated from their families, with the expectation of having to die before ever having truly lived. The few students studying in other countries were tightly monitored by the Frente POLISARIO's political apparatus, which deprived them of their passports and their fellowships and provided them with a minimal daily allowance.

Diplomas were collected by the representative of the Frente POLISARIO and the student was obliged to return to the Frente POLISARIO.

16. The leaders of the Frente POLISARIO were serving only their own interests, and he hoped that international public opinion would soon see through their machinations and that the suffering of the Saharans in the camps would come to an end.

17. Mr. Boida withdrew.

18. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bachir took a place at the petitioners' table.

19. Mr. BACHIR said that he had been a founding member of the Frente POLISARIO, in which he had held many important positions up until 1992. In his opinion, the Saharan question continued to exist because it provided the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO with a way of enriching themselves and of furthering their personal interests, which had nothing to do with the future of the Saharans.

20. For more than 20 years, in the Tindouf area in the Algerian desert, the Frente POLISARIO had kept some 20,000 Saharans detained in four camps in the hope of receiving humanitarian aid for them from European non-governmental organizations or other international organizations. The refugees were tortured, abused and exposed to the elements. Since the creation of the Saharan Red Crescent in 1976, the Frente POLISARIO, well-versed in influencing national and international organizations, had been diverting for its own purposes Western aid intended for the refugees. Those organizations had been duped, creating a climate of confusion in international public opinion, which considered the Frente POLISARIO to be the victim rather than the perpetrator of crimes against humanity, such as mass execution of dissidents and even ethnic cleansing of tribes that had offended its leaders.

21. The suffering of the refugees in the camps had been hidden from the international community. Foreign aid was systematically diverted, "lost" en route by the Red Crescent. That aid was then sold in bordering countries. Money for schools and hospitals was deposited in foreign accounts, leading the four refugee camps with only one small clinic. No outside organization had been able to carry out a census of the population in the camps, not even the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who nevertheless indicated every year the financial aid provided to that population, aid which he was not able to monitor. Because the High Commissioner had not yet identified the refugees in Tindouf, the Frente POLISARIO was able to inflate the number of refugees to between 165,000 and 700,000. The figure currently put out was 200,000 although there were fewer than 40,000 persons in the camps, of whom only some 20,000 were Saharan. The extra aid was diverted to the Army, the Ministry of Trade and to the personal projects of the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO.

22. Such was the cruel reality of the Frente POLISARIO, an enterprise that usurped the human rights of refugees detained against their will and sought only to maintain the status quo. It remained intransigent, preventing the repatriation of the Saharans in the Tindouf area, despite the best efforts of the Secretary-General.

23. Mr. Bachir withdrew.

24. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bahi took a place at the petitioners' table.

25. Mr. BAHI, a Moroccan journalist of Western Saharan stock, said that, like so many others, he had been imprisoned unjustly by the Frente POLISARIO enduring 10 years of isolation, malnutrition, suffering and torture before finally escaping. He had been an eyewitness to the torture and mistreatment inflicted by the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO on those forced into the camps, whose only crime was to demand the right to return to their homeland. Thousands of innocent persons had been the victims of such excesses, and hundreds had died or been crippled as a result of torture, mutilation and mistreatment, a fact admitted even by the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO. They were kept isolated in camps some 50 kilometres from Tindouf in inhuman conditions and denied basic care. The women and girls were the victims of insults, forced labour, violence, rape and abortions.

26. The false accusations made by the Frente POLISARIO against him were typical of the shameless lies it had told over the preceding 20 years, some of which had been confirmed by the tribal leaders, members of the MINURSO identification committee, who like thousands of other escapees had fled to Morocco.

27. He called on the Committee and the international community, in the name of humanity, to apply the relevant international instruments and conventions, put an end to the conditions in the camps and restore to the detainees their right of movement and their right to return to their homeland and families.

28. Mr. Bahi withdrew.

29. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had concluded from its consultations with the Saharan Red Crescent, that there were nearly 140,000 persons living in the refugee camps. That figure did not include the 8,000 Saharans studying abroad, the nomadic populations estimated at some 25,000 persons, or the Saharan army.

30. UNHCR had also found, following a mission to Algeria in June 1996, that the Saharan refugee camps were open and accessible. Its officials had been able to move around the camps without impediment, and refugees had answered their questions without hesitation or fear. Algerian and Saharan authorities had reiterated their full support for UNHCR, whose officials had been informed during informal contacts with the refugees that the latter wanted to repatriate within the context of an overall settlement, rather than as individuals in a spontaneous manner. With respect to the question of monitoring assistance programmes for Saharan refugees, the UNHCR mission had concluded from its observations, that assistance was indeed reaching the intended beneficiaries.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, 2055-2057 and 2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VIII) and A/51/316 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (continued) (A/51/23 (Part III, chaps. V and VI))

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and A/51/212; A/AC.109/L.1853; E/1996/85)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/51/3, chap. V, sect. A)

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/51/373)

31. Ms. KHAN-CUMMINGS (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that in 1996 there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, mainly in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, at different levels of economic, political and social development. If the goals established in the plan of action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the year 2000 were to be attained, several issues must be addressed, including the strategies of the Special Committee on decolonization, the Committee's membership and its relationship with the administering Powers, and the role of regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations in the decolonization process. The Special Committee had used the mechanism of regional seminars in the Caribbean and the Pacific to ensure interaction with representatives of the peoples, experts in the field and relevant regional and international organizations. Such interaction could serve to widen the discussions and the approaches needed to address the situation in the remaining Territories. However, the lack of attendance by elected territorial representatives in the seminars continued to limit further progress. The CARICOM countries were of the view that the visiting mission remained a valuable mechanism for evaluating the situation in a Territory. In view of the decline in the Special Committee's membership, and given the fact that the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was well past its mid-point, it might be worth exploring the possibility of filling the vacant seats.

32. A new compact was needed between the United Nations, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the administering Powers. The CARICOM countries believed that

the cooperation of all administering Powers was essential if the Committee was to effectively fulfil its mandate and the Decade's goals were to be achieved. In that regard they congratulated New Zealand for its exemplary performance as an administering Power in Tokelau. The role of regional organizations and United Nations agencies was also crucial in addressing the needs of Non-Self-Governing Territories, many of which were small islands. In that regard, the CARICOM countries wished to commend the continuing support given by the South Pacific Forum to the Territories in the Pacific and the role of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in several technical projects in the Caribbean. The CARICOM countries had recently pledged their continuing support to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in need of special assistance, in particular to the Government and people of Montserrat.

33. After commending the role being played by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Western Sahara, she expressed the CARICOM countries' concern about the deadlock in the identification process and urged all parties concerned to resume dialogue in order to enable that process to be completed, the United Nations settlement plan to be fully implemented and, ultimately, an acceptable referendum to be held.

34. The CARICOM countries were acutely aware of the particular constraints faced by small islands, especially their vulnerability to natural disasters. They had a special interest in the activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and shared the view that progress within that framework should be firmly linked with economic and social development and environmental protection.

35. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Special Committee on decolonization remained of utmost importance as long as the right to self-determination was denied to the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The lack of progress in those Territories was a direct consequence of the reluctance of the administering Powers to fulfil their duties under the Charter and to cooperate with the Special Committee. The Special Committee had shown flexibility by adopting innovative approaches in recent years. However, some administering Powers refused to participate in its meetings and to allow it to send visiting missions to the Territories. In his delegation's view, a United Nations visiting mission was the best means of assessing the situation in a Non-Self-Governing Territory and ascertaining the wishes of its people. It was regrettable that the United Nations Secretariat no longer paid adequate attention to the issue of decolonization and that press releases giving details of the Special Committee's meetings were no longer issued.

36. Mr. ODHIAMBO (Kenya) said he was concerned that, three and a half decades after the adoption of the Declaration, the United Nations still had a list of 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. He urged all the administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee. In his view, the inadequacy of political, economic, social and educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying the right to self-determination and independence. In that regard, he praised the Government of New Zealand for its commitment to assist the people of Tokelau to attain a greater degree of self-government and economic self-sufficiency in preparation for their future status.

37. It was disappointing that the parties to the conflict in Western Sahara had not made more progress towards the fulfilment of the settlement plan for the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum. The lack of political will and flexibility had resulted in the suspension of the identification process and the reduction in the strength of the military component of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). He urged the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to engage in high-level negotiations for the resumption of the identification process. His delegation remained confident that the United Nations, in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity, would soon break the deadlock preventing implementation of the settlement plan and thereby avert a regional crisis of unpredictable proportions.

38. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) said that decolonization had brought freedom to hundreds of millions of people in what was a striking accomplishment of the United Nations. New forms of colonialism were replacing the old, however, and it was important to bear in mind that the right to self-determination was fundamental for all peoples. Some peoples, unfortunately, were still being denied that right, including the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who had suffered under a harsh occupation for nearly 50 years, despite various Security Council resolutions recognizing their right to self-determination. The claim that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India was false; in fact it was a victim of Indian colonialism. India had emerged as the greatest colonizer State in the world, forcibly annexing areas, trying to convert neighbouring regions into protectorates and sponsoring terrorism. Pakistan, for its part, was firmly committed to the goal of a world free of colonialism, which he was confident would be achieved by the dawn of the twenty-first century.

39. Mr. DE MATOS (Cape Verde) said that international political conditions were currently favourable to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In Western Sahara, for example, implementation of the United Nations settlement plan, featuring as it did an impartial, free and fair referendum, was the best way out of the current dangerous impasse. Cape Verde wished to encourage the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to pursue their dialogue in that connection.

40. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to restart the stalled settlement plan for Western Sahara. Morocco had worked indefatigably for the implementation of the plan. The key to the plan was a referendum in which all Saharans who had been duly identified by the Identification Commission could participate. The current impasse had resulted from the Frente POLISARIO's opposition to the identification of Saharans living outside the Territory. Yet they were undoubtedly Saharans, who had left for political, economic or other reasons.

41. The proposed solution put forward in the Secretary-General's report of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986) had been opposed by the other side. It was regrettable that the Security Council, which might have adopted the proposal, had yielded to pressure from the Frente POLISARIO and its supporters. The only result had been to prolong the suffering of the Saharans being held in the camps near Tindouf, who for the most part were not refugees and had the right to return home, a right guaranteed by the Charter yet one which was denied them. It was not Morocco that was exerting improper pressure, as numerous journalists

and the members of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) could testify. Morocco hoped to see the settlement plan implemented, so that all Saharans could return and participate in the development of Morocco and the entire Arab Maghreb.

42. Mr. AL ZAYANI (Bahrain) paid tribute to the accomplishments of the United Nations in building a world free of colonialism. Its years of unremitting effort on the part of the world body had been crowned with success: most countries were now independent and had taken their rightful places in the international community of States, having shaken off their colonial status and the impediment to social, cultural and economic development which that status represented. It was to be hoped that any residual pockets of colonialism, along with racial discrimination and foreign domination, would shortly be eradicated.

43. Mr. BANDORA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the United Nations had done a remarkable job in overseeing the process of decolonization, yet many peoples had still not been able to exercise their right to self-determination. The Special Committee's role continued to be vital, and it was unfortunate that the administering Powers (with the happy exception of New Zealand) had failed to cooperate with the Committee. The question of Western Sahara was a source of concern. It was regrettable that the Security Council had taken the easy option of gradually abandoning Western Sahara because of the difficulties involved. The Frente POLISARIO and Morocco should be encouraged to work together to organize a referendum under the settlement plan, which was the internationally acceptable framework for the self-determination of the Saharan people.

44. Mr. BYAMUGISHA (Uganda) said that Uganda wholeheartedly supported the just struggle of all colonized people to freely and democratically determine their own future. For most countries, including Uganda, the United Nations had been the principal forum through which they had informed the world about their plight; it remained equally relevant to those still struggling against colonialism. As a former colony, Uganda appreciated the value of self-determination and freedom and knew very well that no amount of brute force could ever crush the will of a people struggling against injustice, oppression and foreign domination.

45. His delegation was deeply concerned about the impasse in the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara and the suspension of the identification process. It appealed to both parties to engage in high-level direct talks to break the deadlock and urged the United Nations and the international community to stand by the Saharan people in their hour of need. Unless the deadlock was broken, the entire subregion could be plunged into unprecedented instability. Africa had had more than its fair share of conflicts. In Uganda, which had witnessed some of the most vicious conflicts, the policy of dialogue and national reconciliation had broken the cycle of violence and self-destruction. Through such a policy, a just, peaceful and lasting political solution could be found to the problem of Western Sahara.

46. Mr. STANISLAUS (Grenada) said that his Government urged Morocco and the Saharan people to resume direct talks to permit the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum in accordance with the settlement plan. The principles of the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and independence must

be applied. The purposes and principles of the Charter had been reaffirmed by many heads of State and Government during the commemorative session of the fiftieth anniversary. The parties must sail with the wind of change that was blowing in their direction.

47. Mr. CHEKENYERE (Zimbabwe) said that Zimbabwe attached great importance to the role played by the United Nations in promoting the exercise by the peoples of colonial Territories of their right to self-determination and independence. It therefore urged the administering Powers to cooperate with and participate in the Special Committee's work so that it would be possible to achieve the objective of eradicating colonialism by the year 2000.

48. Recent actions by the Security Council to reduce the military component of MINURSO, despite the fact that the settlement plan for Western Sahara had not been implemented, suggested that the plight of the Saharan people might not be a priority of the Council. Innovative ways must be found to break the deadlock with regard to the identification process, which must not be held hostage by those who were bent on altering the criteria based on the Spanish census of 1974. The settlement plan remained the best option for pursuing a long-lasting solution in the interests of both parties. His delegation urged the parties to engage in direct dialogue in order to resolve all outstanding issues and give the long-suffering people of Western Sahara the opportunity to exercise their democratic right to determine their destiny through a referendum as stipulated in the settlement plan.

49. Mr. CAMACHO-OMISTE (Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group of countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica (representing Central America), Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela), said that, in order to complete its mandate, the Special Committee needed the active participation and cooperation of the administering Powers. The exemplary cooperation of New Zealand with the Special Committee had made it possible to achieve progress in the self-determination of the peoples of the Territories currently or formerly under its administration.

50. The Rio Group welcomed all measures designed to provide the Non-Self-Governing Territories with the necessary means for the establishment of a solid and adequate economic base and for the preservation and protection of their environment and culture. At the same time, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and adjacent areas must be free from the deployment and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The continuing presence of military bases and installations in certain Territories ran counter to the efforts for peace and could be an obstacle to the implementation of the principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on decolonization.

51. The Rio Group supported the settlement plan for Western Sahara and called on the parties involved to hold direct talks in order to cooperate with the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and promote the holding of a just and impartial referendum to enable the people of the Territory to exercise fully their right of self-determination.

52. The Rio Group hoped that the positive evolution of bilateral relations between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom would make it possible to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the question of sovereignty over the Malvinas islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization.

53. Mr. FELICIO (Brazil) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made on behalf of the Rio Group. With only three years remaining in the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the United Nations must reaffirm its commitment to granting all those still living under any form of colonial rule the opportunity to exercise their right of self-determination. The pivotal role of the United Nations in the area of decolonization had been widely recognized. In that connection, the letter from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee concerning the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/C.4/51/2) contained no reference to decolonization. His delegation believed that sufficient resources must be allocated in the budget to every mandate established by the General Assembly, and it was prepared to consider proposals for a prompt reply to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee.

54. The concept of decolonization was broad, but its application was complex, since each particular case was different. Ad hoc solutions must be devised, always bearing in mind the principles enshrined in the Charter and in relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. A comprehensive approach should include the expansion of the political and economic bases of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to prepare them to exercise their right to self-determination fully and freely.

55. Where Western Sahara was concerned, his delegation called upon the parties involved to work with the Secretary-General in a genuine spirit of cooperation so that the settlement plan could finally be implemented. The maintenance of the ceasefire was an undeniable achievement; the necessary political will must be shown to achieve a just and lasting solution, in the best interests of the people of Western Sahara.

56. His delegation appreciated the efforts being made by the Secretary-General in striving for a fair and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor in conformity with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. It placed great hopes in the continuing talks between Portugal and Indonesia and in the all-inclusive intra-East Timorese dialogue.

57. The declaration recently issued by the Presidents of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries, Bolivia and Chile at their Tenth Meeting had reaffirmed support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the dispute over sovereignty of the Malvinas islands and had reiterated the hemispheric interest in a prompt solution in accordance with United Nations and Organization of American States resolutions.

58. Mr. MASSAMBY (Mozambique) said that the slow pace of negotiations between the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO was disappointing. The withdrawal of the Identification Commission underlined the need for tolerance and mutual accommodation as a prerogative for the final settlement of the issue.

Taking into account the Bolivian experience, his delegation believed that the establishment of peace was facilitated mainly through political will. It was necessary to accommodate the differences between the parties, in the interests of the well-being of their peoples. His delegation encouraged the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to cooperate with a view to achieving a definitive solution which should be acceptable to the parties concerned and to the international community as a whole. Mozambique subscribed to the principle of self-determination of all peoples and supported all initiatives conducted by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity concerning Western Sahara. In that context, and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1056 (1996), it encouraged the two parties to demonstrate the political will, cooperation and flexibility necessary to permit the resumption and early completion of the identification process and the implementation of the settlement plan.

59. Mr. ARKWRIGHT (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, in their statements, the representative of Bolivia, speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, and the representative of Brazil had referred to the sovereignty dispute over the Falkland, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands. His Government's position was well known, and had been set out most recently in his delegation's right of reply to the statement made by the Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs in the plenary Assembly.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.